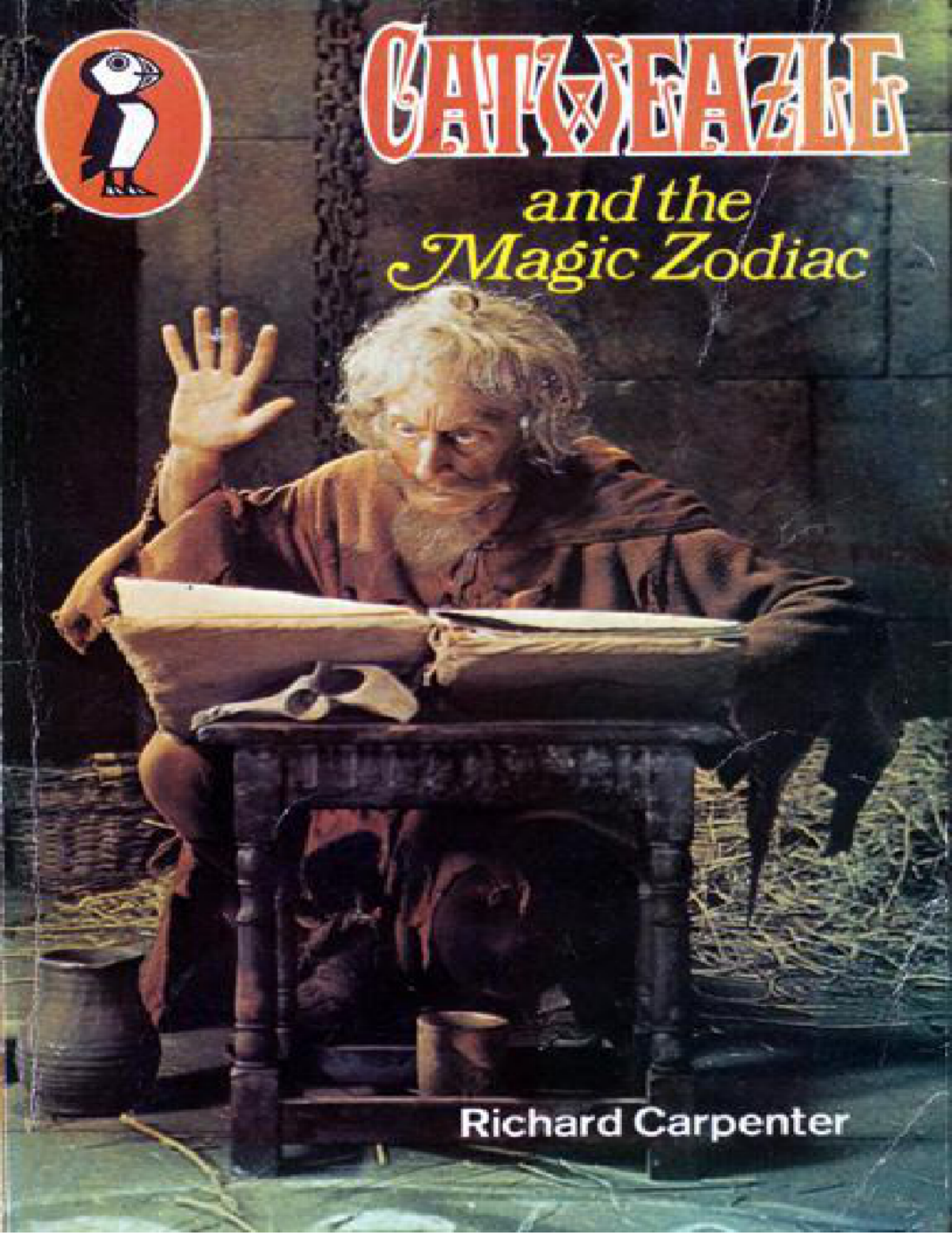
CATWEAZLE
and the
Magic Zodiac
Richard Carpenter

PUFFIN BOOKS
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CATWEAZLE
AND THE MAGIC ZODIAC

'Thou great Norman lump!' muttered Catweazle the magician. 'If I conjure till Doomsday, I cannot make thee gold,' and there was a sympathetic croak from his familiar, Touchwood. Even the world of Electrickery had been better than this, thought Catweazle bitterly.

They were captives, imprisoned in the deepest dungeon of Farthing Castle at the behest of the great Norman lord, William de Collynforde, and likely to remain so unless Catweazle's magic worked for once, and he managed to fly from the accursed castle.

Fly he did, but once again it was through time, not space. Hurling himself, full of faith, from the battlements, Catweazle landed splosh in the moat — but the castle had vanished! In its place was a large white house with a clock tower with a little turret on top. Cedric Collingford, the boy who lived in the house, was to be his ally in a new series of magical and hilarious adventures, in which Catweazle seeks the 'Thirteenth Sign' of the Zodiac which he believes will help him fly back to his own time, and Cedric hopes to restore his family fortune by finding the lost Collingford treasure.

Catweazle's presence produces just as many hilarious situations as it did in the first book, *Catweazle.* Once again the illustrations are by George Adamson.

For readers of eight and over.

RICHARD CARPENTER

CATWEAZLE and the Magic Zodiac

Illustrated by George Adamson

PUFFIN BOOKS

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To Geoffrey
for his special magic

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And to my wife Annie for much inspiration.

THE ESCAPE

Catweazle was sitting with his tattered book of magic across his knees when William de Collynforde, Lord of Farthing Castle and High Sheriff of the Andredsweald, strode into the dungeon.

'Well, sorcerer?' growled the Norman.

'Nay, not well,' replied Catweazle, shivering miserably, 'I have the bone-ache.'

William de Collynforde scooped up a handful of lead coins from a large pile on the floor. 'Lead! Still lead!' he muttered, in angry disappointment.

'Ay. Nothing works!'

'Turn this to gold!'

'Master, I have tried and tried again — '

'Thou art a magician?'

Catweazle nodded.

'And hast magic powers?'

' 'Tis so — ' began Catweazle.

'Then use them villain!' roared Lord William, losing his temper. 'Give me power. The power of gold!' He hurled the coins to the floor. 'Here shalt thou stay till thou hast made me gold,' he said cruelly as he left the dungeon. The door thundered shut and Catweazle listened as the heavy bolts were slid home and his captor's echoing footsteps died away in the distance; then he made a rude noise and stuck out his tongue.

'Thou great Norman lump!' he muttered. 'If I conjure till Doomsday, I cannot make thee gold.'

There was a sympathetic croak from Touchwood, who was sitting in a small puddle in the darkest corner of the dungeon.

'Why did we return to this time, Touchwood?' Catweazle asked the toad. 'Why did we leave the world of electrickery?'

Touchwood had no idea. He crawled slowly over to the Zodiac circle Catweazle had drawn on the flagstones and squatted down somewhat disrespectfully on the sign of Taurus the Bull.

'What power hath gold?' Catweazle wondered as he picked up his familiar and put him in his special pocket. ' 'Tis not the power I seek. I seek the power to set us free, to fly from this accursed castle and never — ' Catweazle stopped in mid sentence. Fly! Of course! That was the answer. If only he could fly... Flying had given him a bit of trouble in the past but he never gave up trying. It was something he had always wanted to do. He opened his book again and turned quickly to the most suitable spell.

' "The power to fly as do the fowls of the air," ' he read, his dirty

forefinger travelling swiftly along the strange script. Then he picked up a long white hazel wand and arranged himself in the middle of his magic circle to begin the incantation.

‘ “O spirits that rule the great circle of stars,” ’ he read, ‘ “grant me the power to fly. By the sign of the Ram, the sign of the Bull, the sign of the Heavenly Twins,” ’ he chanted, and as he named each sign, he touched it lightly with his wand. ‘ “By the sign of the Crab, of the Lion, of the Maiden, and the Balances. By the Scorpion, the Centaur and the Goat. By the sign of the Water bearer, and by the sign of the Fish — ” ’

Suddenly a small hatch in the door slid open and a lump of meat came through, impaled on the end of a sword. Catweazle ignored this interruption and went on with the spell.

‘ “Now the power to fly is thine,” ’ he read. ‘ “Therefore, haste thee to an high place; leap into the air and fly.” ’

Catweazle’s gaoler, who was secretly rather frightened of him, jiggled the sword impatiently, but the magician took no notice; there was a sort of postscript at the bottom of the page, which he found puzzling.

‘ “If thou dost not fly,” ’ he read, ‘ “then ’tis thy bad luck.” ’

Catweazle thought about this, but as he couldn’t understand it, he shut the book, pulled the proffered meat from the sword and began to eat hungrily. The sword was withdrawn almost at once and the gaoler’s worried face appeared at the hatch instead.

‘Dost fear me, hog-face?’ mumbled Catweazle through a mouthful of meat.

The gaoler began to close the hatch. ‘Stay!’ said Catweazle quickly. ‘I will not harm thee.’

The gaoler hesitated.

‘I will show thee magic,’ suggested Catweazle. It was important that he escaped before the power to fly began to wear off and already he was forming a very cunning plan. The gaoler’s eyes widened with fear and once more he started to close the hatch.

‘Wouldst thou not learn the mysteries?’ said Catweazle beguilingly. ‘Harken! I can become invisible. Thinner than air.’

The gaoler looked at him disbelievingly.

‘ ’Tis so,’ Catweazle went on. ‘Wouldst thou see?’

The gaoler nodded stupidly.

‘Close this little window whilst I mark ten and I will vanish.’

The gaoler, completely fascinated, slowly closed the hatch.

Catweazle sprang into action. He grabbed his magic book and shinned up the rough hewn stones of the wall and on to the narrow lintel above the door, counting slowly and loudly up to ten. Then the hatch in the door below him slid open again and the gaoler peered in.

‘Canst thou not see me?’ called Catweazle loudly, making his voice echo deceptively round the dungeon.

‘N-n-n-nay,’ stammered the gaoler and crossed his fingers in superstitious fear.

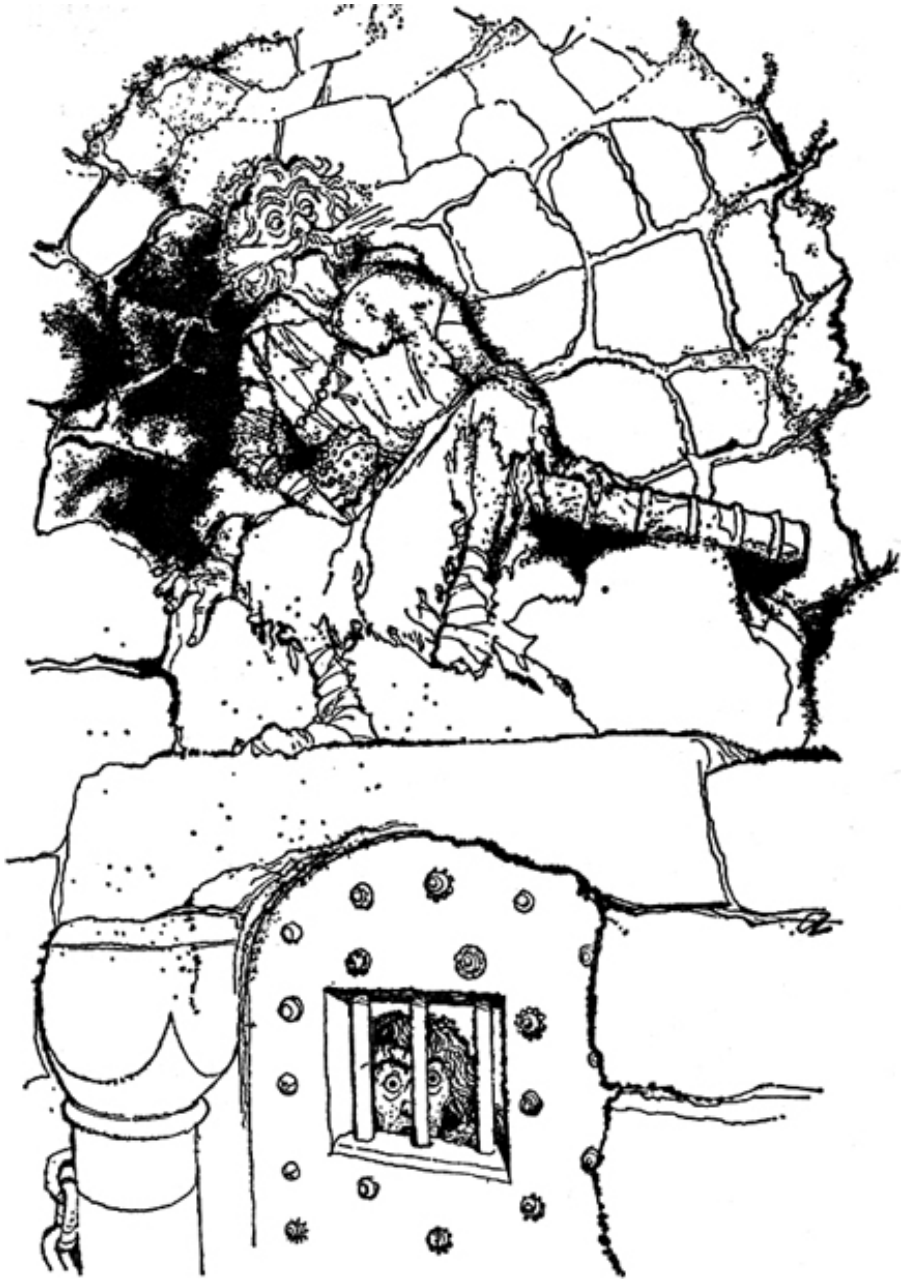
‘Yet I am here,’ Catweazle went on. ‘Come. Touch me.’

The gaoler was sure now the magician really was invisible; he slid back the bolts and pushed open the door. Catweazle watched the man pass beneath him and then jumped down and gave him a great push, sending him sprawling across the flagstones. Then Catweazle skipped silently out of the dungeon, bolting the door behind him. There was a roar of fury and the gaoler’s angry face glared at him through the hatch.

‘Know that I am Catweazle, master magician,’ leered Catweazle triumphantly and shut the hatch.

The gaoler began to kick the door and bellow imprecations as Catweazle ran up the steps, still safely clasping his magic book. There was a faint gleam of daylight far above him and he scampered towards it panting with excitement.

He reached the top and paused to get his breath. Then he peeped round a half-open door and looked out at the courtyard of the castle. A soldier stood on guard with his back to the door. Across the courtyard another soldier guarded the entrance to the tower. There was nobody else in sight.



‘An high place,’ muttered Catweazle, looking up at the tower, ‘an high place.’

With a shout he ran out to the middle of the courtyard and capered in front of the astonished soldiers to draw them from their posts and away from the tower. Then, as they lumbered after him with drawn swords, he doubled back to the tower and shot up the spiral staircase.

He ran round and ever upward, his bony shoulders bumping against the walls, his feet stumbling as he grew dizzy. Below him, the alarm

bell was tolling and he could hear the shouts and curses of his pursuers. His legs grew heavy. The eight months of imprisonment had weakened him and he was exhausted when he finally burst out on to the top of the tower. He ran to the battlements and looked down.

The moat lay far below. For a moment Catweazle was frightened, but when the soldiers appeared he clambered on to the battlements and then turned to face them. They stopped in surprise. What new trick was this?

'Fools!' taunted Catweazle. 'Dost thou not know? I have the power to fly as a bird doth.' He began flapping his arms wildly. 'Salmay. Dalmay. Adonay!' he shouted and leapt into space.

The castle walls shot past in a blur and the moat came spinning up to meet him. Catweazle hit the water with a mighty splash. There was a roaring sound and for a moment he seemed to melt into a great whirling blackness...

Moments later he shot to the surface and thrashed about blindly, swallowing several mouthfuls of muddy water but still clutching his book of magic.

'I flew not!' he spluttered. 'Then 'tis my bad luck!'

He was furious that the spell had failed him. Soon the Normans would be coming for him. He gave a hunted look across the moat and gasped with astonishment. The castle had vanished.

A wide lawn swept down to the edge of the moat where a willow tree trailed its long branches in the water. Beyond the lawn there were roses and cypress trees and a large white house with a clock tower and a little steeple on top. He waded towards the willow and hauled himself on to the bank. Feeling in his soaking pocket, he took out Touchwood. The toad gave a watery croak. Catweazle stared at the house for a long time and the muddy water dripped from his beard. Slowly he realized what had happened. Water held a special magic for him; once again it had brought him to the strange world where the spirit of electrickery lived and all men had magic powers.

‘ ’Tis time hath flown — not I,’ said Catweazle sadly, but his usual curiosity was so strong that he began to creep towards the house, flitting from tree to tree, from bush to bush, and being very careful not to be seen.

He had reached the safety of a thick yew hedge when he suddenly heard voices. Very slowly he peered over the top.

‘The first party is arriving at three-fifteen,’ said a tall, distinguished-looking man. ‘Americans. You’d better get changed.’

‘Long or short tour, my lord?’ asked the other man, who had a rather mournful expression.

‘Depends how many there are, Mr Groome,’ said the tall man, as they began to walk away towards the house. ‘Let’s hope it’s a large party, to get the season off to a good start.’

Catweazle was anxious to find out where he was, so he followed them and watched from behind a pillar as they went inside the house. There were several notices with arrows pointing in different directions. ‘To the Tea Rooms.’ ‘To Lake.’ ‘To Picnic Area.’ But although Catweazle could read the ancient scripts of his magic books, he couldn’t read these letters at all.

His curiosity grew stronger and he crept into the main hall but he nearly ran out again when he saw the suits of armour standing against the walls. Instead however, he drew his magic knife Adamcos from the sheath round his neck and carefully tapped a breastplate. It was all right. The armour was empty.

Suddenly he heard footsteps and crouched down beside the staircase but Touchwood came flopping from his special pocket, crawled across the bottom of the stairs and hid in a dust pan by the newel-post.

A jolly-looking woman appeared, carrying a duster and a brush. She picked up the dust pan and then went busily up the stairs. Catweazle watched her with horror and then began to creep after her. Touchwood had to be rescued at once.

As Catweazle disappeared, Mr Groome hurried into the main hall pulling on a peaked cap which had 'Guide' written across it. Almost immediately a coach drew up outside and a small party of American tourists came into the main hall. Groome cleared his throat and addressed them importantly.

'Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,' he began. 'I should like to welcome you to Kings Farthing, home of Lord and Lady Collingford and of the famous Collingford collection of military relics dating from the Norman Conquest.'

There were polite murmurs of appreciation from the tourists. A large gentleman from Chicago trained a movie camera on Groome who drew himself up to his

full height and continued rather self-consciously. 'The house stands on the foundations of Farthing Castle, built by the Normans in 1070 and destroyed during the Civil War, the English Civil War that is,' he said, eyeing them coldly. 'The present house was built by Lord Alfred Collingford in 1852.' Groome pointed to a portrait of a rather wild-looking man dressed in black.

'Legend has it,' went on Groome, who had learnt all this by heart, 'that he found the old dungeons of Farthing Castle below this house and that there he dabbled in Black Magic, er — a favourite hobby of his. However, so far, no secret passages have been discovered. It was during Lord Alfred's time that the Collingford treasure mysteriously disappeared.'

'Gee! Treasure!' gurgled a teenager from Texas.

'Er... mysteriously disappeared,' repeated Groome, who had lost his place. 'The treasure was a hoard of gold and jewels taken from a Spanish galleon in 1585 by Lord Francis Collingforde.'

Upstairs, Catweazle watched as the housekeeper unlocked one of the bedrooms. She put the dust pan down on a chest, took some sheets from the top drawer, and began to make up the big fourposter bed. After a moment Touchwood crawled dizzily out of the dust pan, but as Catweazle darted to grab him, the housekeeper turned and he ducked out of sight behind a chair. Touchwood crawled to the edge of the chest and dropped heavily into the half-open drawer. The housekeeper, who hadn't noticed him, pushed it shut and turned back to finish making the bed. Then Catweazle peered over the top of the chair and was astonished to find that Touchwood had vanished. Before he could recover, the housekeeper had left the bedroom, once again locking the door. Catweazle was trapped.

'Touchwood!' he whispered, looking wildly round, 'Touchwood!!' But his familiar's answering croak was muffled inside the drawer and the only sound Catweazle heard was a taxi drawing up outside the main entrance of Kings Farthing.

A thin rather sad-looking boy, with glasses and long dark hair, jumped out, paid the taxi man and struggled into the house with a bulging suitcase and a cello. Cedric, the Collingfords' only son, was home for the summer holidays.

'You're awfully thin,' said his mother, giving him a kiss.

'I'm all right really,' said Cedric, carefully leaning his cello against the wall of their little private sitting-room.

'And haven't you grown!' Lady Collingford exclaimed.

'So has his hair,' murmured Lord Collingford.

'But they all wear it like that nowadays,' said Lady Collingford.

The door opened and the housekeeper bustled in. She beamed when she saw Cedric.

'Hello Cedric. It's good to have you home again,' she said.

'Hello Mrs Gowdie,' said Cedric with a friendly smile.

'Hasn't he grown?' she said to Lady Collingford. 'Thin though.' She turned back to Cedric. 'I expect you'd like something to eat.'

'Er... I'll go and unpack first,' said Cedric.

'Shall I help?' asked his mother.

'Oh, no thanks,' replied Cedric very quickly, 'I shan't be long.'

Mrs Gowdie gave him a key. 'I always lock the bedroom when the season starts,' she said. 'With so many strangers wandering around the house and going where they're not supposed to.'

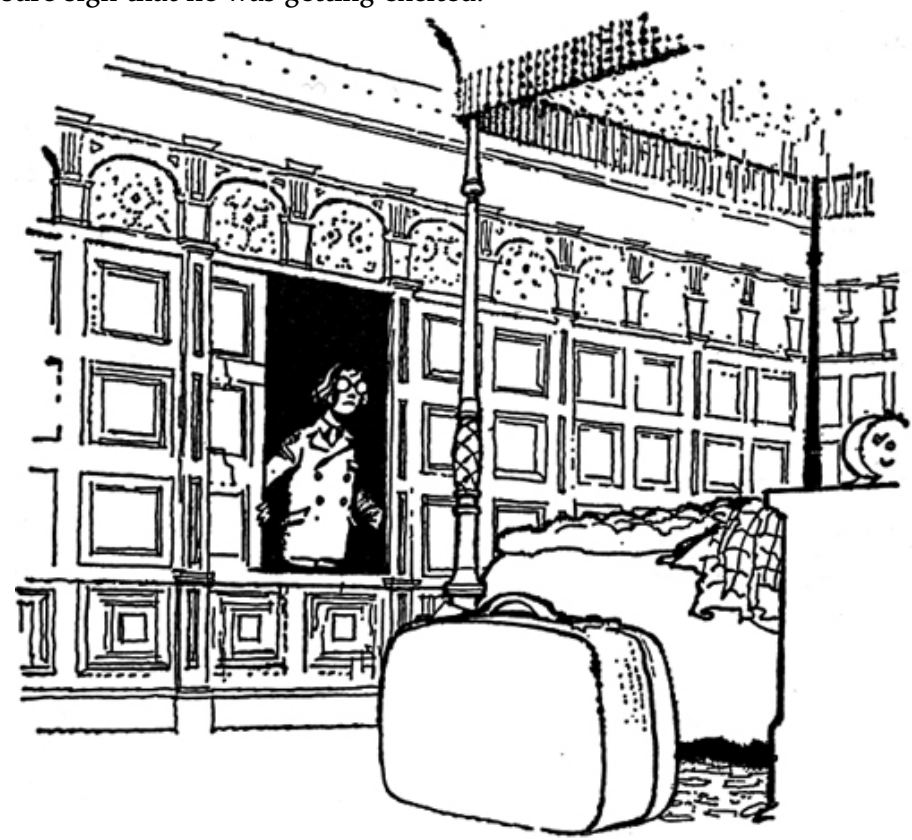
She would have been very surprised if she had known that she'd locked such a dirty old stranger in Cedric's bedroom. Catweazle, with the aid of Adamcos, had managed to track down Touchwood's hiding place by now, and was busy reciting suitable spells, hoping that one of them would manage to unlock the door for him.

He was in the middle of the eighth of his incantations when his

thumbs pricked. This was a warning of approaching danger and he just managed to scramble under the bed before Cedric unlocked the door and came in carrying his suitcase.

Catweazle watched from under the bed as the strange boy began to unpack. He was very surprised when, after a quick look into the passage, Cedric locked the door on the inside and slowly turned one of the pillars of the fourposter. A section of the oak panelling at the other side of the room slid back and Cedric climbed into the opening and disappeared from sight.

Catweazle was extremely taken aback. He struggled out from under the bed, sneezed, twiddled his beard and looked at the hole in the wall. What magic was this? Where had the boy gone? He began to make an anxious fizzing noise as he examined the opening. It was a sure sign that he was getting excited.



'Gab gaba agaba,' he muttered nervously. Then he blew on the ring he wore on his thumb, just in case there were any evil spirits about, and climbed into the darkness.

Stone steps led the old magician downwards until he began to wonder if they would ever end. It grew steadily colder and presently a mushroomy sort of smell came up from the darkness. It reminded him of his dungeon in Farthing Castle. Even the steps began to look the

same.

But when he reached the bottom and came face to face with the very door of his former prison, he sank to his knees, convinced that somehow he had slipped back through the centuries and was once more in the clutches of the Normans.

There was a light inside the dungeon and the door was ajar. Catweazle peered in. His old cell was barely recognizable. Magical symbols covered the walls. The rough flagstones had been replaced with smooth black tiles and an elaborate magic circle had been painted on them, surrounded by the twelve signs of the Zodiac. There were four grim-looking iron candlesticks round the circle and the boy was busily lighting them with little magic fire-sticks.

Catweazle craned his neck round the door, overbalanced and staggered forward on to his knees. Cedric backed away. It was difficult to tell who was the more frightened.

'Mercy!' stammered Catweazle. 'Harm me not!' He took a piece of chalk from his robe and drew a protective circle around himself. 'Sator Arepo Tenet Opera Rotas,' he intoned fearfully.

Cedric stared at the bedraggled apparition and finally managed to speak. 'How... how... did you get down here? Who are you?'

'Enchant me not,' pleaded Catweazle, crossing his fingers, 'Touchwood was lost.'

'Who?' said Cedric, still very alarmed.

'Touchwood,' repeated Catweazle, extremely anxious to please the young sorcerer. 'My familiar,' he explained, as he took the toad from his robe. 'Hast thou no familiar?'

'I don't think so,' said Cedric, looking in bewilderment at Touchwood, who croaked a rather wary greeting. 'Have you found another way in from outside?'

Catweazle, relieved to find the young sorcerer was apparently friendly, got slowly to his feet, picked up his book, stepped carefully out of his little circle and began to examine the designs adorning the walls. This was the magic he understood!

'Ah ha!' he said, pointing at one of them. ' 'Tis the great seal of Solomon!'

'Is it?' said Cedric, who was beginning to think that he was dreaming.

'And here, Belphegor,' Catweazle continued. 'Thou hast drawn them well.'

'Where's the way in?' Cedric persisted.

'Truly thou art a mighty magician,' said Catweazle.

'What?' said Cedric.

'A mighty magician,' repeated Catweazle.

'Oh no, not me,' said Cedric nervously. 'This was Lord Alfred's

hidey-hole, I think. He was the one that thought he was a magician. My great-grandfather,' he added.

Catweazle suddenly turned and stared at him intently. 'What dost thou seek?' he said.

'Er… nothing,' stammered Cedric.

'Ah but thou dost. Thou dost.'

'Who are you anyway?' said Cedric, very anxious to change the subject. But Catweazle had already turned back to the pentacles and hexagrams on the wall. His attention had been caught by an inscription and he began to study it closely.

'I think that's some sort of code,' said Cedric. 'Lord Alfred must have done it. I'm afraid you'd have to be a magician to read that.'

' "Twelve are they that circle round" ' translated Catweazle.

Cedric was staggered. 'You? A magician?' he gasped.

Catweazle flapped a dirty hand at him impatiently and began again.

'Twelve are they that circle round
If power you seek they must be found.
Then look for where the thirteenth lies.
And mount aloft, the one who flies.'

Catweazle looked at Cedric in triumph. ' 'Tis the writing called Malachim,' he said, and opening his sodden book, he showed Cedric a page written in exactly the same script.

'Whoever are you?' asked Cedric.

'I am Catweazle.'

'Catweazle?'

'The riddle is simple, Owlface. 'Tis a flying spell.' Catweazle pointed at the Zodiac circle. 'The twelve that circle round. They must be found; each one in turn. Then the thirteenth Sign — '

'Whatever's that?'

'As yet I know not. But find them all and we shall fly'

'Are you sure that's what it means?' said Cedric.

Catweazle's thumbs began to prick. 'Thy father comes for thee,' he hissed at the boy.

'How do you know that?' asked Cedric incredulously.

'I see him here,' Catweazle muttered, tapping his forehead, 'in the Eye of Time. Get thee hence!'

Cedric ran to the door, driven by the urgency in the old magician's voice. Then he stopped.

'What about you?' he said.

'Go!' ordered Catweazle.

Cedric pounded up the steps and reached his bedroom just in time to hear a knock at the door. He raced over and unlocked it as quietly as he could, and found his father outside holding the cello.

'Tea's ready,' said Lord Collingford.

‘I was just coming,’ said Cedric breathlessly.

‘I’ve brought your cello.’

‘Thanks,’ said Cedric putting it quickly inside the bedroom and hastily shutting the door.

‘Got everything sorted out?’

‘Er... not quite,’ said Cedric, as they began to walk down the corridor towards the staircase.

In the main hall Cedric nodded towards the portrait of Lord Alfred.

‘Do you think there are still any magicians today?’ he asked.

‘I hope not,’ replied his father.

‘He believed in magic though, didn’t he?’

‘So they say. He tried to fly, you know.’

‘To fly?’ repeated Cedric, remembering what Catweazle had said.

‘Yes. Using magic. From the top of a cliff. Beachy Head I think it was.’

‘What happened?’

Lord Collingford looked at his son’s eager face. ‘I’m afraid gravity won,’ he said drily.

While Cedric was having tea with his parents, Catweazle left Lord Alfred’s chamber and found his way up to the bedroom again.

He jumped when he caught sight of himself in the mirror over the washbasin. Then he remembered about mirrors and showed it to Touchwood. The toad stared balefully at his reflection and puffed himself up to show that he wasn’t really frightened.

‘ Tis thou, thou gump,’ grinned Catweazle evilly, and put Touchwood down on the soap dish. The old magician twiddled the taps and accidentally turned one on. Then he spotted Cedric’s toothpaste and grasped it in his grimy fingers. He became sick with apprehension when the paste oozed on to his wrist. ‘Sting me not — O white worm!’ he gasped and stood very still, hoping the snake would crawl back into its strange home without biting him.

Then he realized that it wasn't a snake after all and poked at it. He tasted it and found that he liked it, so he squeezed another white worm from the tube and licked it up with relish, while behind him water from the basin began to overflow on to the floor because the plug was in the plug hole, a precaution Mrs Gowdie always took to keep spiders out.

There came a warning croak from Touchwood, marooned between the taps. Catweazle looked round and saw the water pouring on to the carpet. He grasped the tap and shook it.

'O water, I command thee vanish!' he cried in a panic. 'Salmay. Dalmay. Adonay!' He drew Adamcos and waved it hopefully. The water took no notice and Catweazle began to fizz with panic as Touchwood lowered himself grumpily into the water and floated across the basin and croaked to be lifted out.

'Nothing works,' whimpered Catweazle. 'Nothing works!'

The bedroom was immediately above the sitting room where the Collingfords were having tea.

'You haven't written much this term,' said Lady Collingford.

'I've written half an opera,' said Cedric.

'We meant to us, Cedric,' said Lord Collingford. 'Music's a jolly good hobby but you don't want to get too wrapped up in it. You seemed to spend most of the Easter holidays in your bedroom.'

Cedric said nothing. They didn't know that it was during the Easter holidays he had found the secret staircase and the magic chamber,

and he was sure Lord Alfred had hidden the treasure somewhere inside it.

'It's such a pity you can't find a friend who lives reasonably near,' said his mother, and then looked up as a large drop of water fell into her tea cup. An ominous crack was spreading across the ceiling. Beads of water ran along it and began to drip down steadily.

Cedric jumped to his feet and tore out of the sitting-room leaving his parents staring at the ceiling in horror.

He shot up the stairs two at a time and ran along the corridors until at last he reached his bedroom.

The floor seemed to be one big puddle. Quickly he pulled the plug out of the basin and turned the tap off. The secret panel was not quite shut and he knew the strange old man was hiding behind it.

'I'll kill you,' he hissed at the panel. Catweazle slid it open and looked out anxiously.

'Kill me not,' he said.

'You ought to be locked up.'

'Nay, not again!' cried Catweazle, sliding the panel shut as his thumbs pricked once more.

A moment later Lady Collingford appeared in the doorway carrying a mop. 'Oh Cedric!' she sighed, looking at the pool of water.

'I must have forgotten to turn off the tap,' said Cedric unhappily, 'I'm terribly sorry. I'll mop it up.'

He looked so miserable that his mother relented. She handed him the mop. ‘I know it was an accident,’ she said. ‘I’d better go and calm your father.’

When she had gone, Cedric opened the panel again.

‘What did you mean. Not again?’ he asked a cringing Catweazle.

‘I come from the time of the Normans,’ the magician confided as he climbed back. ‘They imprisoned me, but I escaped.’

‘Oh, did you?’ said Cedric backing away nervously.

‘ ’Tis my second journey hither,’ said Catweazle, putting his finger on the light switch. ‘I know of thy magic. ’Tis thine electrickery. Shine tiny sun!’ and he switched on the light. He wondered if Cedric would reveal more of the mysteries.

‘Teach me all thy magic,’ he said, ‘and I will teach thee mine.’

‘Teach me magic!’ gasped Cedric. ‘You’re not serious?’ ‘Did I not read thy flying spell?’

‘Look, this is the twentieth century! If I want to fly I’ll get on a plane.’

‘Nay, not a plain — a mountain. Thou must be on high. But first we must find the thirteen signs.’

‘I’ll be as potty as you in a minute! Listen, you find them and then come back and show me how well you can fly.’

‘Wilt thou not help me?’

Cedric looked at Catweazle. There was certainly something very mysterious about him.

‘All right, I’ll see,’ he said. ‘But you’ve got to go now, so follow me and keep quiet.’

There was nobody about as they reached the staircase. Cedric perched on the banister rail and slid silently and smoothly down to the hall. ‘All clear,’ he whispered up to the astonished Catweazle. ‘Come on!’

Before Cedric could stop him, Catweazle nervously climbed on the banister rail, shut his eyes in terror and whizzed down the staircase with a great wail of fear. He cannoned into a hat stand at the bottom and crashed to the floor. The noise echoed round the main hall.

Lord and Lady Collingford heard the crash in the sitting-room where Mrs Gowdie was busily putting buckets under the dripping ceiling. They went quickly towards the main hall but Catweazle had already hidden.

‘What on earth happened?’ said Lord Collingford, surveying the wreckage and wishing that the holidays were over.

‘I sort of fell,’ said Cedric lamely.

‘You’ve ruined this hat stand!’

‘Well it wasn’t very pretty, Charles,’ said Lady Collingford, trying to calm him.

‘You’re doing very well for your first day home,’ Lord Collingford continued angrily.

‘Are you all right?’ asked Lady Collingford, trying to calm him

‘Oh yes,’ said Cedric unhappily.

‘That hat stand belonged to my father,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘Now come on everybody,’ said Lady Collingford over-brightly, ‘Let’s all have a really tough game of croquet shall we?’

Lord Collingford could never resist croquet and secretly he knew that the hat stand, one of those monstrosities with ram’s horns for hooks, was no great loss.

‘Oh all right,’ he muttered, ‘I’ll take on both of you.’

When they had gone, the door of the grandfather clock opened and Catweazle, his beard and whiskers quivering with excitement, climbed out and helped himself to a pair of ram’s horns from the shattered hat stand.

‘ ’Tis the sign of the Ram,’ he whispered with wonder. ‘The first sign of the Zodiac! Truly, the great quest has begun!’ and he scuttled out of Kings Farthing and into the trees still brandishing the precious horns.

The next morning, as the clock in the tower of Kings Farthing struck five, Catweazle pushed his way out of the hedge he'd slept in and crept up towards the house, burning to have another look at the sorcerer's secret room. He found a half-open window, climbed in silently, and crept up the stairs, carrying a little sack with his magic book and the ram's horns. Cedric was a very light sleeper and woke when he heard Catweazle open his bedroom door. He kept very still and watched the magician trying to open the secret panel. Then he jumped out of bed.

'I'm getting very fed up with you,' he hissed.

Catweazle nearly died of fright. 'Mercy! Mercy, my master,' he implored, sinking to his knees.

'You can't keep coming in here,' whispered Cedric angrily.

'Show me thy secret chamber,' Catweazle begged. 'Look at the time!' Cedric brandished his alarm clock in Catweazle's face. 'Five o'clock! I don't get up until eight!' Catweazle took the clock from him gingerly and examined it. He held it to his ear. 'Tack, tack, tack, tack,' he mimicked, 'why doth it say tack, tack?'

'Well it wouldn't be much good if it didn't,' said Cedric. 'Don't you know what a clock is?'

'Nay. 'Tis magic?'

Cedric sighed. 'It tells you the time.'

'Ah! Time.'

'That's right. The time to get up, the time to eat, and the time to go to bed.'

Catweazle looked at him with amazement. 'This thing tells thee?'

'Yes,' said Cedric, taking it from him.

'Dost thou obey?'

'Of course.'

Catweazle was puzzled. 'Why dost thou?' he asked. 'I rise when I wake, eat when I hunger, sleep when I am weary.' He snapped his fingers contemptuously at the alarm clock. 'I fear thee not, thou ticking tyrant.'

'You slay me,' grinned Cedric.

'Nay, I am thy friend,' said Catweazle anxiously. 'Hast thou food?'

'This isn't a hotel you know. Look, either you go or I'm going to fetch my father.'

'What of thy secret chamber?' asked Catweazle with a crooked smile.

'You wouldn't tell him would you?' gasped Cedric. Catweazle nodded evilly.

‘All right,’ said Cedric, giving in, ‘I’ll get you something to eat.’ He put on his dressing-gown. ‘Come on,’ he sighed, ‘the grub’s downstairs.’

Catweazle, who thought grubs were very tasty, followed Cedric to the kitchen. He snapped his fingers again at the old-fashioned wall clock and then became very interested when Cedric opened the fridge and took out a cold chicken.

‘ ’Tis cold,’ he said, touching the freezing compartment.

‘Of course it’s cold,’ said Cedric.

Catweazle opened the door.

‘Snow! In summer!’ he mumbled. ‘More magic!’

‘Don’t keep that open,’ said Cedric crossly, ‘the fish fingers will melt!’

‘Fish — with... fingers!’ said Catweazle with horrors He jumped as the fridge suddenly switched itself on, and started to throb noisily. Cedric finished cutting the chicken and put the rest back in the fridge. ‘Why are you so jumpy?’ he asked.

‘I fear the magic of this new world,’ said Catweazle. Cedric eyed him warily. ‘Oh yes,’ he said, ‘I keep forgetting. You’re from the past, aren’t you?’

‘Ay,’ replied Catweazle, getting Touchwood from his pocket, ‘nine hundred years. Hast aught for Touchwood in thy Winter Box?’

‘No,’ said Cedric. ‘They don’t do frozen worms.’ He handed Catweazle a leg of chicken and some bread and opened the kitchen door. ‘Come on,’ he said.

‘Where shall I go?’ said Catweazle.

‘How about back to the Normans?’

Catweazle shook his head. ‘Thou hast forgotten the flying spell in thy secret chamber. We must find the thirteen signs of the Zodiac.’ He opened his sack and brandished the horns. ‘See!’ he said. ‘The sign of the Ram.’

‘So what?’ said Cedric.

‘Now I seek the Bull.’

‘You find a bull,’ grinned Cedric, ‘and you’ll be flying before you know it.’ He pushed Catweazle outside.

‘But where shall I live?’

‘Haven’t you really got anywhere?’

‘Nay.’

Cedric pointed at a distant group of trees. ‘Wait for me there,’ he said. ‘I’ll come after breakfast.’

‘Thou wilt not fail me?’

‘ “See it wet, see it dry,
Cut my throat if I tell a lie,” ’ said Cedric.

Catweazle felt the rhyme was sufficient proof of good intentions,

and flitted off across the croquet lawn, gnawing the chicken leg.

During breakfast, Lord Collingford suggested that Cedric might help Groome clear the billiard room. It had been used as a box-room for some years and was full of things nobody wanted. Now Lord Collingford was planning to use it to display a collection of cavalry equipment.

'But I can't,' said Cedric hastily, 'I'm going for a long walk.'

'You can do that any time,' said his father. 'Mr Pickle, the junk man, is coming this morning to take all the rubbish away and I must have the room cleared by the time he arrives.'

So Cedric helped Groome to dump the stuff outside the main entrance, eventually managing to slip away when Eustace Pickle drove his battered lorry up to the house. Groome sighed. Boys didn't change, they were all bone idle, he thought bitterly, as he began to help Pickle load up.

They lifted a large yellow tricycle on to the lorry. It was a full-sized one and had once belonged to Lord Collingford's grandmother. 'An early campaigner for women's rights, she was,' Groome explained. 'No sense of balance though.'

'Oh, a fanatic was she?' asked Pickle.

'Not really,' said Groome. 'Just couldn't ride a two wheeler.'

Pickle sneezed. He suffered badly from hay fever.

'Bless you,' said Mr Groome gloomily.

'Ta,' said Pickle, and sneezed again.

Cedric found Catweazle sitting on a tree stump and apologized for keeping him waiting.

'Finding you somewhere to live isn't going to be easy,' he said.

'We must cast the runes,' said Catweazle. 'They will tell us.'

‘The runes?’ said Cedric, who didn’t know what they were.

Catweazle collected half a dozen twigs and squatted down on his haunches.

‘What are you playing at?’ asked Cedric. ‘Cowboys and Indians?'

‘Maggot!’ said Catweazle angrily. ‘Sit thee down!’

Cedric sat down and watched the magician carefully.

‘Pax! Sax! Sarax!’ said Catweazle softly, closing his eyes and dropping the twigs in front of him. Then he began to examine them, poking them with the point of his magic knife.

‘Ah! Tcha, tcha, tcha!’ he fizzed excitedly. ‘The dragon shall flee!’

‘What?’

‘Behold! He guards the mighty cave.’

‘What mighty cave?’

‘And look thou there,’ Catweazle went on, pointing at two crossed twigs, ‘an enchanted house. ’Twill be my home.’

‘What about a few giants?’ said Cedric sarcastically. ‘Or a couple of beanstalks? Honestly, Catweazle — ’

‘Dost thou not believe, thou twittering turnip?’

‘What? Dragons guarding mighty caves and enchanted houses?’

‘Wood louse!’ said Catweazle, getting to his feet, his old joints cracking, ‘thou shalt see!’

He stalked off into the woods without looking back. Cedric followed, though he was sure Catweazle was slightly mad, but nevertheless wanting to see what he would do next. It was a very hot day but it was all he could do to keep up with the old man and when at last Catweazle did stop Cedric flopped down in the grass with a sigh of relief. ‘All right,’ he said ‘where’s the mighty cave?’

‘It is not here,’ said Catweazle unhelpfully.

They had stopped quite near a small country pub and Cedric took some money from his pocket and gave it to Catweazle. ‘Go and get us some crisps and pop,’ he said.

Catweazle hadn’t the remotest idea what Cedric was talking about. ‘Crisps and pop?’ he muttered.

‘Yes,’ said Cedric ‘four bags. I’m not allowed in, you see.’ He pushed Catweazle in the direction of the pub. ‘Go on! Crisps and pop.’

Catweazle shuffled off towards the pub endlessly repeating ‘Crisps and pop, crisps and pop,’ to make sure he wouldn’t forget it.

He went cautiously into the pub and went up to the bar looking round at all the shining glass. Fred Oakly, the publican, looked at the ragged figure with suspicion, and Eustace Pickle, who had just driven from Kings Farthing with his load of bric-à-brac, turned round and sneezed.

‘Yes?’ said Fred.

‘Pips,’ said Catweazle, very unsure of himself, ‘and... er... crop.’

‘Eh?’ breathed Fred.

‘Crops?’ said Catweazle uncertainly, and proffered the strange silver coins. ‘And... er... pip.’

The two men looked at him in bewilderment.

‘F-f-f-four bags,’ said Catweazle, hazily remembering what the boy had told him.

‘Four bags?’ said Fred.

‘I reckon he wants some crisps,’ said Pickle.

‘Ay. ’Tis so!’ exclaimed Catweazle. ‘Crisps!’

Fred gave him a funny look and went to get some. Pickle sneezed again and pushed a small vase of flowers away from him towards Catweazle. The magician took them from the bowl and was about to thank Pickle for this unexpected gift when Fred came back with the crisps.

‘Here!’ said Fred indignantly, taking the flowers from Catweazle.

‘Pop!’ said Catweazle suddenly.

Fred jumped. ‘What?’ he said.

‘Pop! Pop! Pop!’

Fred backed away. He wasn’t quite sure if Catweazle was really a lunatic or if it was all some sort of elaborate practical joke. He pulled himself together. ‘Lemonade or orangeade?’ he asked.

‘Nay!’ said Catweazle, ‘Pop!’

Fred looked at Pickle as if to say, ‘What have I done to deserve this?’ and fetched Catweazle a large bottle of lemonade. Catweazle put down the money, picked up his purchases, backed away a few steps and then scurried out, leaving the two men transfixed with astonishment.

‘Whatever was that?’ said Fred.

Cedric was waiting for Catweazle round the side of the pub where they could eat unobserved. Catweazle handed over the picnic and Cedric gave him a bag of crisps. ‘Eat up!’ he said.

Catweazle hesitated for a second and then bit the little bag. When that was no good he stuffed it into his mouth and tried to chew it up, crisps and all. Bits of bag and crisps went all over the place and he started to choke, so Cedric quickly opened the lemonade, making it fizz violently.

‘It boils! It boils!’ Catweazle moaned, crisps falling from his beard.

‘Don’t you like it fizzy?’ asked Cedric.

In answer, Catweazle jumped up and began to fizz himself. His eyes grew round and he pointed speechlessly into space.

‘Are you all right?’ asked Cedric.

‘The second Sign!’ cried Catweazle. ‘ ’Tis Taurus the Bull!’ He was pointing towards the inn sign.

‘The Old Bull,’ read Cedric. Catweazle ran over to the sign and

began to shin up the post. Cedric tried to pull him away, but he wrapped his arms and legs round it and hung on.

'You can't have it!' said Cedric.

' Tis the Sign of the Bull!'

'Exactly. The Old Bull at Bodford. And that's where it's staying.'

'I want it. Without it I shall never fly.'

'You can't have everything you want,' said Cedric crossly, 'it's bad for you.'

Catweazle's thumbs pricked suddenly. He let go of the post and dragged Cedric behind Pickle's lorry. They didn't see Fred and Pickle come out of the pub carrying a ladder and Cedric went on whispering fiercely at Catweazle while Fred put the ladder against the post and climbed up to unhook the sign. He handed it down to Pickle who put it on his lorry, and the two of them went back into the pub. Catweazle peered round the lorry and began to fizz wildly when he saw that the sign had disappeared.

'Where's it gone?' gasped Cedric. Catweazle drew Adamcos.

' 'Tis near,' he said, and climbed on to the lorry before Cedric could stop him.

'Get down!' warned Cedric, as the pub door opened again. Fred and Pickle came out and carefully hung a brand new inn sign from the post. Then Pickle climbed back into his lorry and drove away down the lane.

It was a short but very uncomfortable ride for Catweazle. He was bounced up and down on the lorry with all sorts of things sticking into him; a broken fireguard, an old brass fender, and one of the pedals on the tricycle. As the lorry went round a bend everything slid about and crashed down on top of him. Then with a final bump Pickle drove into his warehouse.

He'd had a very successful day, he thought, as he undid the tailboard and began to unload the tricycle. Then he stopped. Catweazle stared out at him from underneath a coal scuttle and a broken oil stove.

' 'Ere!' said Pickle with alarm, 'get off my lorry!'

Catweazle clutched the inn sign and shook his head.

'Look, mate,' said Pickle nervously, 'don't be awkward.'

' 'Tis the Sign!' said Catweazle.

'I know it's a sign,' said Pickle. 'Now come on, get down!'

'Thou knowest 'tis the Sign?'

'Are you getting off?'

'Hast thou more? I seek them also,' said Catweazle. He put the sign down for a moment and climbed off the lorry.

'Hop it!' said Pickle.

Catweazle, anxious to please, gave a little hop.

‘Get going!’ ordered Pickle.

Catweazle picked up the inn sign again and made for the gates.

‘Come back!’ yelled Pickle. He grabbed at the sign and they both tugged furiously. They danced around the warehouse, each trying to get the sign. Then Pickle’s nose began to itch with an oncoming sneeze. His hands flew to his face and he let go of the sign, sending Catweazle staggering backwards into a pile of plates.

With a cry of rage Pickle grabbed a broom and began to attack. Catweazle fended him ofE with the sign, until he got behind a large table piled high with dirty china ornaments. Pickle stopped his attack at once. It was stalemate. He gave another tremendous sneeze.

‘Hast thou the nose itch of summer?’ asked Catweazle. ‘Give me the Sign and I will cure thee.’

He drew Adamcos, whereupon Pickle raised his broom again but Catweazle waved the mysterious knife in front of his face and gradually put him into a trance.

‘ “Nose cease thy sneeze
Nose take thy ease
No itch hast now
New nose art thou.” ’

Pickle stood absolutely still with a blank look on his face. Then Catweazle snapped his fingers and the little man blinked and shook his head. ‘Put that knife away!’ he said.

Catweazle sheathed Adamcos. The spell was over anyway. ‘Where dost thou keep them?’ he said.

‘Keep what?’

‘The magic Signs.’

Pickle looked at Catweazle. He obviously needed humouring. ‘Oh yes!’ said Pickle. ‘Of course! The magic signs!’ He pointed to a large cupboard. ‘I don’t tell anybody,’ he said confidentially, ‘but I keep ’em in there.’

‘Hast thou all the Signs?’ ‘Yes,’ said Pickle, ‘all of them.’

‘Then thou canst fly,’ said Catweazle with envy.

‘Er .. like a bird,’ said Pickle.

‘Fly for me,’ asked Catweazle.

‘Well, I will in a minute,’ said Pickle hurriedly, ‘but don’t you want to see the... er... magic signs?’

Catweazle nodded and Pickle beckoned him nearer the cupboard, then, flinging it open, he gave the unsuspecting Catweazle a push and shut him inside, just as Cedric ran into the warehouse.

‘Thou flea-ridden fox-faced ferret!’ cursed Catweazle and banged on the door of his prison.

‘He’s mad,’ said Pickle, running out of the warehouse. ‘Keep an eye

on him, will you? I'm going to get a policeman.'

'Thou snake-headed, rat-faced, pig-eared cauliflower!' continued Catweazle.

Cedric unbolted the cupboard. 'Owlface!' said Catweazle.

'I warned you something like this would happen,' said Cedric. 'Now — buzz off!'

'I am no bee, thou wart!'

Cedric grabbed the big yellow tricycle and managed to sit Catweazle on it. Then he put the old man's feet on the pedals and gave him a terrific push. Catweazle shot out of the warehouse, grabbing the sign as he went, and zigzagged off down the road.

A few moments later Pickle returned without a policeman.

'He's gone,' said Cedric.

'Oh my goodness!' groaned Pickle. 'He's nuts! Raving on about magic and flying. Even said he'd cure my hay fever if I gave him an old inn sign.' Pickle stopped suddenly and stared at the dog daisy in Cedric's buttonhole. It was the worst thing possible for making him sneeze, and his nose wasn't even tickling. 'Here,' he said curiously, 'can I borrow that for a moment?'

Cedric handed him the flower and Pickle sniffed deeply at it for some moments and waited for the sneeze. Nothing happened. There was no doubt about it — his hay fever had gone.

'That old feller did it,' he whispered with awe. 'He said he could Well, as far as I'm concerned, he can take whatever he likes!'

Meanwhile, Catweazle was careering down a steep hill, moaning with fear. Unable to stop, he crashed through a fence at the bottom,

tumbled down an embankment and finished up sitting bruised and dazed on the railway line. When the stars had finished winking and spinning before his eyes, he found himself staring into the mouth of a tunnel.

'The mighty cave,' he muttered, as he got unsteadily to his feet. A rumbling sound came from the tunnel and he drew back. The noise grew louder and the earth shook. Catweazle cowered in fear and a moment later a train roared out of the tunnel and thundered away down the line.

Catweazle opened his eyes. It was the dragon! The runes had not lied.

He picked up the tricycle and walked forward into the tunnel, balancing his precious sign across the handlebars. He felt the presence of unknown demons all around him in the sooty blackness, but he muttered spells to drive them away and came out at last into the daylight.

Several hours later he reached a branch in the line, and turned off down an overgrown track which reminded him of the dried-up bed of a stream. It was hard work pushing his rattling tricycle along it, but he believed his magic was helping him and leading him forward.

As the sun was setting he reached a tiny derelict railway station, almost hidden among the trees. The windows had been boarded up for years and grass grew between cracks in the platform. Convolvulus almost covered the weather-beaten notice which would have told Catweazle, had he been able to read it that he had arrived at Duck Halt.

'Our journey is over, Touchwood,' he said quietly as he showed his familiar their new home. 'Here shall we gather together the Signs and make our magic.'

Catweazle spent several days turning Duck Halt into a magician's chamber. He collected various herbs in the surrounding woods and hung them from the ceiling. There were bunches of wild garlic to keep out evil spirits, foxgloves for healing spells and hemlock and vervain for darker magic. Peeled wands of hazel stood in the four cobwebbed corners and ferns lay on the floor to protect the building from storms.

Now the time had come to make the magic Zodiac.

Catweazle knelt on the dusty floor and drew a large circle with a lump of chalk. He sang the flying spell as he worked.

' "Twelve are they that circle round.
If power you seek they must be found.
Then look for where the thirteenth lies.
And mount aloft the one who flies." '

Touchwood, who had made his home in an old Wellington boot, crawled out with a croak. He liked Duck Halt because there were so many ants and earwigs.

'Hast no thought but thy empty guts!' grumbled Catweazle. 'I too am hungry, thou creeping cleek!' But all the same, he picked up a milk bottle he had thieved from a door-step and poured a little into a dirty saucer, and the toad crawled towards it as his master sat down and unrolled an old railway timetable. He studied it intently and then turned it upside down. 'I shall never read this magic,' he groaned.

Then Cedric, who had tracked Catweazle to his lair the previous day, pushed open the door. He was dressed in his best suit and his hair had been carefully combed.

'Hello,' he said miserably, 'I can't stop.'

'Stop what?' asked Catweazle anxiously.

'Look at me!' said Cedric. 'It's my birthday and they've made me put this on. I've got to keep clean. Mum's invited half the kids in the neighbourhood to tea. I mean, it stops being my birthday. Just becomes an excuse for *s.* bun fight.'

'Canst thou read this?' asked Catweazle handing him the timetable.

'I knew you'd be interested,' said Cedric, with gloomy sarcasm. He glanced at the yellowing paper. 'It's only an old timetable,' he said, and gave it back.

'Time?... tables... of time?'

'All I got was socks and ties,' said Cedric, returning to the subject of his birthday.“ Not a present I really wanted.'

'Nor I, my brother,' muttered Catweazle, looking round at the twentieth century.

'When's your birthday?' asked Cedric.

‘I know not,’ said Catweazle, intent on dividing the circle on the floor into the twelve houses of the Zodiac.

‘You must have some idea,’ Cedric persisted. ‘How old are you?’

Catweazle looked up briefly and glared at him.

‘Oh yes, of course,’ said Cedric, rather embarrassed, ‘the Normans — I keep forgetting.’

Catweazle drew the twelve signs round the outside of the circle. When he had finished he placed the ram’s horns on the House of Aries and the inn sign on the House of Taurus. ‘Today I seek Gemini,’ he said. ‘The Heavenly Twins.’

‘The Rossington girls are coming to my party,’ said Cedric. ‘They’re twins, but they’re not very heavenly.’

Catweazle picked up a primitive fishing rod. ‘Wilt thou come fishing?’ he asked.

‘You never listen to anything I say,’ said Cedric. ‘I can’t come fishing. I can’t do anything today.’ They went out on to the platform and Catweazle marched off into the woods. Cedric sighed gloomily and began making his way back to Kings Farthing.

His mother met him in the main hall. ‘Where have you been?’ she asked. ‘The film show’s off, I’m afraid. The projector’s broken down. Your father’s playing croquet over at Banden. And the magician’s gone fishing.’

Cedric was thunderstruck.

‘What did you say?’ he gasped.

‘The magician’s gone fishing,’ repeated his mother.

‘How did you find out about him?’ said Cedric after a long pause.

‘Mrs Gowdie gave me his phone number.’

‘His what!’

‘And I spoke to his wife.’

‘His wife!!’

‘He’ll be back soon and she is sure he will be able to come.’

‘But... but,’ stammered Cedric.

‘Vadanti, darling,’ explained Lady Collingford. ‘The magician. He’s coming instead of the film show.’

Cedric breathed a sigh of relief.

‘Perhaps you could help Groome blow up some balloons,’ said Lady Collingford, as she hurried away busily.

Catweazle was walking towards the river. As he drew near the bank he could hear a strange voice. ‘Rain in the south-east will soon spread to all districts,’ it said knowingly. Catweazle peered out of the bushes. The voice was coming from a small black box which had a fine silver wand sticking out at the top. Beside the box, and with his back to Catweazle, a thin man sat fishing.

‘And now back to the cricket,’ said the box.

Catweazle looked down at the grass but there was no cricket to be seen, and after a moment the box began to talk again, this time in a different voice. Clearly it was possessed of many demons.

'It's Villiers again,' it said in a hushed tone, 'from the gas-works end. Slow left arm round the wicket.'

Catweazle began to advance.

'He's out!!' shouted the box.

Catweazle fell over backwards in terror. The angler turned round sharply and looked a little worried when he saw Catweazle sprawled on the grass.

'Er... afternoon,' he said cautiously.

'Fraser came out to that one and misjudged it completely,' said the box smugly.

Catweazle picked himself up and came closer, fascinated by the box. The man put down his fishing rod and picked up the radio. Obviously the old tramp had never seen one before. 'It's a transistor,' he explained, and turned off the cricket commentary.

'Thy sister?' Catweazle was horrified.

'Transistor,' said the man loudly.

'Thou has entranced thy sister?' said Catweazle, sitting down beside him, ' 'tis the magic of the electrickery?'

'Well, you could put it like that, I suppose,' said the man with a nervous laugh.

'Thou art a magician,' said Catweazle knowingly.

'Well I'm blowed!' said the man with astonishment. 'How on earth did you recognize me? You're right, though. I'm Vadanti. Where did you see me work?'

'Wilt show me thy magic?' asked Catweazle.

Vadanti, who could never resist any sort of audience, took a coin from his pocket, made it vanish and then produced it from Catweazle's beard.

Catweazle was delighted. 'I too am a magician,' he confided.

Vadanti looked worried and edged away slightly.

'I twit thee not,' said Catweazle earnestly.

'Well, it does make quite a nice hobby.'

'Hast thou magic books?'

'Oh yes, but I'm afraid most of them are for professional magicians. People in the Magic Circle.'

'Ah!' said Catweazle. 'The magic circle!'

'You've heard of it?'

'I work in it,' said Catweazle proudly. 'Salmay. Dalmay. Adonay!' he exclaimed and suddenly held out Touchwood, a few inches from Vadanti's rather long nose.

Vadanti looked at Catweazle. Was this old chap really a member of

the Magic Circle? Perhaps he'd fallen on hard times.

'You've shaken me,' he said, 'really you have. I'd never have thought you were... well, one of us. Er... what name do you use?'

'Catweazle.'

Vadanti tried to remember if he had heard the name before. 'No,' he said finally, 'doesn't ring a bell. Probably a bit before my time.'

'Ay,' said Catweazle.

'Catweazle,' repeated Vadanti. 'I like it. It's got a sort of early English flavour about it.' He looked at Cat-weazle's ragged robe. 'Of course! that's why you're dressed up like that! What a great get-up! Have you been working today?'

Catweazle nodded.

'Now I get it,' said Vadanti, laughing with relief. 'You know, at first I thought you were crackers.'

'Nay, I am Catweazle.'

Vadanti roared with laugher. 'Oh very good! You do comedy as well then?'

'What of the fish?' asked Catweazle, who was getting a bit lost.

'They're just not biting today.'

'Hast thou cast a spell?'

'No, just a fly,' joked Vadanti.

'Fly?' said Catweazle, with sudden interest.

'Be better after some rain.'

Catweazle put his line in the water and, shutting his eyes, recited a little spell.

'Fish, fish, fish
For thee I wish.
Come do not look
But bite my hook.'

There was a slight tug on the line. Catweazle lifted his rod and swung a splendid roach on to the bank while Vadanti stared at him in amazement. Catweazle smiled complacently.

'How did you do that one?' said the conjuror, convinced it was a trick.

'Magic,' said Catweazle.

Vadanti laughed again. The old man knew his stuff, there was no doubt about it. 'Care to come back for a cuppa,' he said, 'I've a new vanishing box might interest you.'

Catweazle nodded. Mayhap this magician could lead him to the Signs!

Vadanti ran a little joke and magic shop in Elderford. As it was early closing day, his wife had gone round to the local social club for the

afternoon. ‘Bingo!’ explained Vadanti.

‘Schempamporasch!’ said Catweazle, determined not to be outdone.

The back parlour was piled with masks, funny noses, rubber spiders and all sorts of jokes in little grey cardboard boxes. The table was littered with collapsible birdcages, trick swords, rings and packs of cards. There were bottles with false bottoms for hiding wine glasses underneath, gaily coloured boxes covered with silver stars, and long cardboard tubes stuffed with the flags of all the nations.

Catweazle was delighted. Here at last was a real magician. He picked up some trick rings and examined them.

‘Sell a lot of those,’ said Vadanti. ‘No skill required. Takes about a month to master it.’ He winked at Catweazle. ‘And I make a lot of money out of stink bombs, especially at the end of term.’

He picked up a sword, swished it through the air, and an orange appeared on the point. He handed the orange to Catweazle who took the strange fruit from him and sniffed it cautiously.

Just then Vadanti found his wife’s note by the telephone. ‘I’ve got a children’s party at four. I’d better get changed,’ he said.

He began packing tricks into a suitcase.

‘Changed!’ said Catweazle, rather worried, ‘into what?’

‘Well I can’t work like this, can I? I wouldn’t feel right without tails.’

‘Tails!’ gasped Catweazle.

Vadanti pressed a little button on the top of a large box and the lid slid open silently. He went outside and returned with a little white rabbit which he put gently into the box. There were holes all around it so that the rabbit could breathe, and it settled down quite comfortably inside.

‘There you are, Percy,’ said Vadanti, tapping the box. He turned to Catweazle. ‘Kids love rabbits. Always go well. I once had a rabbit for my birthday and I’ve never forgotten it. It was the only present I really wanted. Shan’t be long.’ He dashed away up the stairs.

While Vadanti was changing Catweazle pressed the button and took Percy from the box leaving a bunch of bananas in his place. Then he tucked Percy under his robe. ‘The only present I really wanted’, he muttered, thinking Owlface might also like a rabbit for his birthday.

Vadanti returned a few minutes later wearing a little beard, evening dress and a red-lined opera cloak.

‘Who art thou?’ asked Catweazle.

‘Presenting Vadanti, man of magic and mystery,’ said the conjuror, bowing low before Catweazle.

Catweazle helped Vadanti put his stuff into the car and watched him out of sight. Then he went back to Duck Halt, where he put the rabbit in a battered cardboard box which he tied up with string, then balanced him on the handlebars of his tricycle and set off for Kings

Farthing.

Vadanti had already arrived. Lady Collingford met him at the door. She was wearing a paper hat at a rakish angle and looking rather desperate. The noise from the party was deafening.

'Thank heavens!' she said shakily. 'Do come in, Mr Vadanti. They're all eating at the moment, so you'll be able to get ready in peace.'

She led him into the drawing-room. 'If there's anything you want, don't hesitate to ask.' She left him to unpack.

It took him quite a while to prepare the show. He put Percy's special box underneath a well-camouflaged hole in his trick table, and he was still getting things ready when Catweazle backed into the drawing-room. He had just left his 'present' in the main hall and had been frightened by the uproar from the dining-room.

'Mr Catweazle!' exclaimed Vadanti.

Catweazle spun round.

'They haven't made a double booking, have they?' said Vadanti. Catweazle had no idea what a double booking was and shook his head nervously.

'Thank goodness,' said Vadanti. 'It happened to me once, you know. I had to share a children's party with a sword-swallower. I've never forgotten it. The poor man got hiccups.'

Catweazle tried to creep away but Vadanti stopped him. 'Don't go away!' he said, 'I've got the cabinet trick in the car. I'd cut it because my assistant's ill but you could easily replace him. I'll run through the programme with you. It's all standard stuff.'

So Catweazle was forced to become Vadanti's assistant and stood trembling beside him when the children came pouring in from the dining-room. Cedric and his mother were the last to come in. 'Oh good!' said Lady Collingford sitting down beside her son, who was gaping a bit at Catweazle, 'his assistant's managed to come after all.'

'Er .. . yes,' stammered Cedric, wondering what on earth was going to happen.

'I found this in the hall,' said his mother, handing him Catweazle's 'present'. 'I don't know who it's from. There's no card.'

'I think I know,' said Cedric, putting it down by his feet.

Vadanti stepped forward and bowed. 'Ladies and... er... boys and girls. I should like to demonstrate the amazing properties possessed by my magic wand.'

A wand appeared in his hand, and Catweazle's mouth dropped open. Vadanti went on talking while the wand seemed to float in space. There was a burst of applause from the children. Catweazle looked at Vadanti with envy. Next, the conjuror filled a glass with water from a big jug and then covered the tumbler with a cloth. 'Ab-racadabra,' he cried and crumpled the cloth. The glass of water had vanished. The

children clapped again and then roared with laugher when Catweazle, beside himself with curiosity, lifted the trick water jug to investigate, and knocked over the glass hidden underneath.

'You idiot!' hissed Vadanti and went quickly on to his next trick.

'The Heavenly Twins,' said Vadanti. 'They can never be separated!' He held up two small plastic dolls and Catweazle's eyes nearly popped out of his head. It was the Sign he sought! He watched as Vadanti put two mysterious boxes on the table and a doll in each of them.

'I will now re-unite the twins by magic,' said Vadanti, 'in whichever box you choose.' But before he could get any farther, Catweazle, inquisitive as a monkey, had opened both boxes and taken two dolls from each of them.

The audience rocked with mirth and Vadanti went as red as the lining of his cloak. 'You maniac!' he snarled at Catweazle.

Covered in confusion the wretched conjuror turned once more towards his audience. 'And now it's time to introduce you to Percy — the invisible rabbit.'

Cedric was listening to a scratching sound coming from the cardboard box at his feet.

‘Percy lives in here,’ continued Vadanti, picking up his top hat, ‘but you can’t see him because he’s — ’

‘Invisible!’ shouted the children.

Catweazle began to get very apprehensive as Vadanti put his top hat down over the hole in his magic table.

‘But if I say the magic words I can make Percy appear,’ said Vadanti.

Catweazle wondered what magic words would be able to do that.

Vadanti put his hand through the trap door in the hat and his expression changed abruptly when, instead of Percy, he brought out a large bunch of bananas.

Once more the children roared with laughter and Vadanti glared at Catweazle who suddenly looked very sheepish.

Cedric had undone the parcel by now and found the little rabbit. ‘Is this Percy?’ he called and brought him to Vadanti.

The conjuror was now completely mystified although he felt sure that Catweazle had had something to do with it. He decided to skip to the end of his programme and do the cabinet trick. It was the only way he could possibly win back his audience.

‘And now, as final proof of my amazing power,’ he said loudly, ‘my assistant will get inside this simple box,’ He pushed Catweazle roughly inside a big three-ply cabinet and shut it firmly. Catweazle’s head stuck out of the top and he made a few frightened fizzing noises.

‘Very few men can survive the Swords of Scheherazade,’ said Vadanti, feeling that he was once more in charge of the situation. ‘I shall now pass no less than eight swords into the cabinet and through my assistant’s body,’

Catweazle gave an anguished howl.

‘Don’t overdo it, you old ham,’ hissed Vadanti and picked up a sword and advanced on the cabinet. The cabinet suddenly grew legs and moved away.

‘Stand still, will you,’ said Vadanti, beginning to lose his temper.

‘Nay, thou wilt kill me,’ moaned Catweazle.

Vadanti lunged at the cabinet and Catweazle cried out in terror and, lifting the cabinet, ran round the stage in a frantic effort to avoid the sword. Finally he jumped down and tore off through the french windows with Vadanti in hot pursuit. The children cheered and stamped their feet with delight. There was complete pandemonium. Vadanti eventually gave up the chase, and Catweazle, vowing he would have nothing more to do with the magicians of the New Magic, scampered home in the cabinet. Much later that night Cedric managed to extricate him and then insisted that they took the cabinet back to Vadanti’s house. They dumped it in the garden and went back to Duck Halt.

‘No more stealing,’ said Cedric firmly. ‘The rabbit would have been a

lovely present, but it wasn't yours to give.'

Catweazle ignored Cedric completely and knelt by the Zodiac circle.

'See! I have found the Sign,' he said and put two little olastic dolls above the House of Gemini.

'You're incorrigible,' sighed Cedric.

‘We’ve been burgled,’ Mrs Gowdie told Cedric one morning as he came down to breakfast. ‘Everything’s been taken from the mantelpiece in the sitting-room. The cups, the candlesticks, everything. Even that nasty inkwell. The Inspector’s in there now. Come on!’

Cedric felt terrible. He was sure that Catweazle was to blame and wished that he’d told his parents about the old man long ago. He followed Mrs Gowdie with a heavy heart. It was clear that Catweazle would take anything he could lay his hands on.

In the sitting-room Inspector Pugh, a big saturnine-looking man, was examining the mantelpiece very carefully. ‘The big one stood in the middle,’ said Lord Collingford helpfully, ‘with two smaller ones each side of it. There was a bowl thing on the left — ’

‘No, Charles,’ interrupted Lady Collingford, ‘the bowl was on the right. The little statue was on the left. Next to that creepy-looking inkwell.’

‘Look,' said Inspector Pugh with a sigh, ‘I have to circulate an accurate description of the stolen property. I can’t put down, “that creepy-looking inkwell”.’

‘Of course you can’t, Inspector,’ said Lord Collingford. He turned to Lady Collingford. We must be accurate, Dottie. Now then, the big one’s the British Isles Individual Grand Challenge Cup — ’

‘Urn-shaped,’ said Lady Collingford.

‘With handles,’ added Lord Collingford.

‘With handles,’ said Pugh wearily. ‘Go on.’

‘Two National Championship first prizes and four

County Team awards next to them,’ Lord Collingford went on.

‘Just a minute, my lord. I am sorry to reveal my ignorance, but what were these cups for?’

‘They were all for croquet, of course,’ said Lord Collingford indignantly.

Pugh put his hands together and looked down for a moment. He appeared to be praying. Then he looked up at Mrs Gowdie. ‘Now, Mrs Gowdie,’ he said, ‘you discovered the theft, I believe?’

‘That’s right, Inspector,’ she said.

‘Did anyone call at the house yesterday that you didn’t know? Apart from visitors to the collection, of course.’ ‘Only an old tramp.’

‘An old tramp!’ said Cedric.

‘Go on, Mrs Gowdie,’ said Pugh, glowering at the boy. ‘He wanted a drink of water,’ said Mrs Gowdie. ‘He was very ragged and dirty.’

‘Did you let him in?’

‘Only into the kitchen,’ said Mrs Gowdie. ‘I felt sorry for him, you

see. He seemed so... lost.'

Cedric couldn't bear to listen to any more. He was determined to make Catweazle give back the stuff he'd taken. 'Excuse me,' he said, quickly leaving the room. Pugh resumed his questioning. 'Did he cry?' he asked. Mrs Gowdie looked surprised. 'Well, yes Inspector, he did cry. How did you know?'

' "Tearful Ted"!' said Pugh snapping his fingers.

'I beg your pardon?' said Lord Collingford.

' "Tearful Ted" alias Sid Thompson, alias Ernest Brown. One of the cleverest thieves in the country,' said Inspector Pugh. 'He always works in disguise. Tramps, milkmen, even policemen. I think I'll go for a tour around the area. You never know, I might just be lucky.' As the Inspector drove away from Kings Farthing in

search of clues, Tearful Ted pushed his way into Duclj Halt. He carried a small sack over his shoulder.

'Avaunt!' cried Catweazle, and prepared to launch into a terrible curse.

Ted backed to the door in surprise.

'Hence! 'Tis my castle!' said Catweazle.

'D'you live here?' asked Ted.

'Begone ere I blast thee!'

'Steady on, mate. How was I to know this was your gaff? I was lookin' for somewhere to kip.'

'Gaff? Kip?' repeated Catweazle.

Ted decided to play for a little sympathy. 'I'm all alone in the world, you see.' He gave a little sob. 'I got nobody. No mates — nothing.'

Catweazle looked at him with amazement as Ted managed to squeeze a single tear out of his sharp little brown eyes. 'It's so hard when there's no one understands you,' he groaned. 'No one to help you when you're down and out.' He began to weep bitterly.

'Thou blubbering blow-fly, thou wilt turn the milk!' said Catweazle, and Ted, realizing that his act wasn't working, stopped crying.

'What hast thou there?' asked the magician, pointing at the sack.

'Er... all I've got in the world, brother,' said Ted hastily.

'Brother!' said Catweazle, thinking Ted was a fellow sorcerer. 'Art thou my brother? Dost follow the mysteries?' and he crooked his forefingers each side of his head in the ancient greeting of magical brotherhood.

Ted was sure that the old hermit was crazy. Slowly he raised his fingers to his head in the same gesture. 'Yeah, sure... been at it for years,' he said.

'I also,' said Catweazle proudly. 'Nine hundred years.' 'Get away,' said Ted, humouring him, 'you don't look a day over sixty-five.'

'Thou hast magic in there?'

Ted grasped the sack firmly. ‘That’s right... er... brother.’

‘Wilt thou show me?’

‘No. I don’t think I’d better.’

‘Ah! There are demons!’

‘I’ll say,’ said Ted, catching on fast, ‘any amount in that sack. Little purple ones. Very nasty.’

Suddenly Catweazle’s thumbs began to prick rather violently. ‘Someone comes,’ he whispered. Ted looked swiftly through a crack in one of the boarded up windows. Inspector Pugh was coming cautiously towards Duck Halt looking all around him.

‘You’re right,’ said Ted, ‘I’m off.’

‘What of thy magic?’ said Catweazle pointing at the sack.

‘Hide it,’ said Ted. ‘I’ll be back, late tonight. Don’t open it, will you?’

‘Nay,’ said Catweazle firmly. ‘I fear the purple demons.’

‘Good, said Ted.

He slunk off as Pugh neared the derelict station. Cedric was just getting near Duck Halt as well, and had seen the Inspector leave his car. Angry as he was with Catweazle, he didn’t want the Inspector to catch him, so he crept up behind him and threw a stick into the bushes. His trick worked and Pugh charged off into the undergrowth, convinced it was Ted he had heard.

Then Cedric burst into Duck Halt and confronted Catweazle. ‘Where is it?’ he demanded.

‘What sayest thou?’ said Catweazle.

‘You know what I mean,’ Cedric went on, ‘you broke into Kings Farthing last night didn’t you? You took Dad’s cups.’

‘Cups?’

‘Hand them over!’

Catweazle held up two very chipped old tea cups.

‘I’ll lose my temper in a minute,’ said Cedric, while Catweazle looked bewildered.

‘Right!’ said Cedric and began searching. He rummaged in the cupboards and even looked in the great nest of straw and leaves that was Catweazle’s bed. Eventually he found the sack wedged behind an old packing case and he pulled it out in an unhappy mixture of triumph and disappointment. Catweazle grabbed it from him.

‘Give me that!’ said Cedric.

‘It is not mine to give.’

‘I know it isn’t.’

‘Nay,’ said Catweazle. ‘ ’Tis my new brother’s,’ he said. ‘He bade me guard it.’

Cedric struggled with him and managed to retrieve the sack.

‘Thou must not meddle!’ said Catweazle, anxiously. ‘Inside are little purple demons.’

‘You’ll have to do better than that,’ said Cedric cynically. He untied the sack and pulled out the British Isles Individual Grand Challenge Cup for Croquet. Catweazle stared at it perplexed and Cedric could see that he had no idea at all what the sack contained.

‘You really didn’t know?’ he said.

Catweazle shook his head.

‘You didn’t steal them?’

Catweazle shook his head again and then told Cedric all about his visitor and how Ted had left the sack in his care.

‘But don’t you see,’ said Cedric, ‘if the police had found you with this, you’d have gone to prison, while the real thief would have gone free.’

Catweazle was beside himself with fury. His beard quivered and his blue eyes gleamed dangerously in his wrinkled face. ‘I will raise demons,’ he hissed. ‘He shall be blistered by the seven and seventy plagues of Adramalec. He shall not hoodwink me again. I know him now! I know him now!’

‘Take it easy!’ said Cedric. ‘Now listen. I can’t take this stuff back, they’ll ask too many questions. You’ll have to bring it back tonight.’

‘But... but... but — ’

‘It’s the only way. Come about midnight and I’ll leave a window open.’

It was a pity Cedric couldn’t hear a conversation Inspector Pugh was having with his father. Pugh had failed to find Ted, so he had driven back to Kings Farthing to suggest a plan of action to Lord Collingford.

‘He sometimes does the same place two nights running, my lord,’ said Pugh.

‘The beggar’s got a nerve!’

‘Indeed he has, my lord, indeed he has. He could come back tonight, just when you are not expecting him.’

‘How very alarming.’

‘But we shall be, shan’t we?’

‘Shall be what — ’

‘Expecting him,’ said Pugh solemnly. ‘I’m putting two of my men in the grounds and I’ll keep an eye on things myself. Leave the sitting-room window open and with any luck we’ll catch him red-handed.’

As the clock in the tower struck twelve Cedric crept downstairs to open the window for Catweazle. Suddenly his father stepped out of the darkness and shone a torch in his face.

‘Where do you think you’re going?’ whispered Lord Collingford.

‘I felt hungry,’ stammered Cedric.

‘You’re always hungry,’ said his father, who was carrying a sort of club in his other hand.

‘What’s that?’ Cedric asked.

‘A knob-kerrie,’ replied Lord Collingford grimly. ‘Look old boy, get your cake or whatever and go back to bed-’

‘What’s it for?’

‘Tearful Ted, the burglar. Inspector Pugh thinks he might try again tonight.’

‘What!’ gasped Cedric. ‘Why didn’t you tell me?’

‘Sssh! Don’t wake your mother! I haven’t told her either; I didn’t want her worried, you see. We’ve set a trap. There’s a sitting-room window open and Pugh’s floating around outside with a couple of chaps, so if you’re going to the kitchen — don’t turn the lights on.’ Lord Collingford began to walk off down the corridor.

‘Where are you going now?’ said Cedric anxiously.

‘On patrol. Now get your cake and then — bed, understood?’

‘Yes, Dad,’ said Cedric, but as soon as his father was out of sight, he went quickly into the sitting-room, and shut the half-open window. Then he crept outside to find Catweazle before the police did.

Near the moat Inspector Pugh was briefing P.C. Williams, whom he had stationed behind a laurel bush. ‘Now remember, Williams,’ whispered the Inspector, ‘one blast on the whistle means he’s inside. Two blasts outside, three blasts the front, and four blasts the back. Got that?

‘Yes sir,’ said Williams.

So had Tearful Ted, who was crouching quite close to the two policemen listening to Pugh’s instructions. He waited for the Inspector to walk away and then crept up silently behind P.C. Williams and neatly knocked him out. By the time Williams opened his eyes again he was bound hand and foot and gagged, and Tearful Ted was busily putting on his uniform.

Meanwhile Cedric had spotted Catweazle slinking along by the greenhouses and had dragged him into the shelter of the back porch. ‘The place is crawling with policemen,’ he whispered.

Catweazle made very soft yowling noises of terror.

‘You’ve got to help me put the stuff back,’ hissed Cedric and took him in through the back door. The two of them tiptoed stealthily to the sitting-room and had begun to put the cups on the mantelpiece when they heard two blasts on a policeman’s whistle, followed immediately by three more. Cedric could hear his father coming and ran out of the sitting-room. When Catweazle tried to follow he pushed him back inside.

‘Get out of the window!’ he whispered frantically, pulling the door to and holding it shut as his father reached him.

‘I told you to go to bed,’ said Lord Collingford angrily. Outside, the whistle signal was repeated.

‘Two and three! That’s outside and in the front!’ said Lord

Collingford.

He raced away across the main hall and unlocked the door. Inspector Pugh and a young policeman were already searching among the bushes at the front of the house. Nobody realized that it was Tearful Ted who had given the signal.

Cedric was just going back into the sitting-room to aid Catweazle's escape when Lady Collingford appeared. 'What on earth's going on?' she asked.

'It's the burglar,' said Cedric loudly to warn Catweazle.

'Don't be silly, Cedric, that was last night.'

'He came back. Dad's gone to catch him.'

'Catch him? Where?'

'Out at the front, I think. Inspector Pugh's with him.'

'With the burglar?'

Cedric sighed. 'No, with Dad.'

'Well I think it's very childish,' said Lady Collingford, wrapping her dressing-gown tightly around her, 'running about blowing whistles. The only thing your father will catch is a simply dreadful cold. Come on.' And she took Cedric by the arm.

'But — but — ' he began.

'Bed!' said Lady Collingford firmly.

Catweazle listened to them going away and then jumped with fright when Tearful Ted climbed in through the window. 'Stone the crows!' said Ted, recognizing the old hermit from the railway station.

'Gab gaba agaba!' cried Catweazle, and waved Adamcos at the intruder.

Ted recovered quickly and addressed Catweazle in his best policeman's voice. 'I am P.C. Williams, Elderford Police,' he said. 'Put that knife away!' He was very surprised to see that Catweazle had brought back the cups.

'What's all this?' he said and picked up the sack.

' 'Twas filched from this place by a ragged varlet,' said Catweazle. 'Let him stand before me and I shall blast him!'

'Oh, will you?' said Ted.

'The villain sought to gull me.'

'Did he?'

'But I was too wise.'

'Oh, were you?' said Ted. 'Now what about these valuables?'

'I have come hither to return them.'

'Have you indeed?' said Ted. 'Well it's very good of you-' He slid the window open. 'Off you go,' he said, 'and we will say no more about it.'

Catweazle was actually climbing out of the window when P.C. Davidson, who had been sent to fetch P.C. Williams from the laurel bush, saw him coming out and blew hard on his whistle, twice for

outside, and then four times for back. Then he ran towards Catweazle who scrambled back into the sitting-room.

Ted was already running towards the main hall. Things were getting too hot for him and now all he wanted was to make a quick getaway.

Catweazle scurried upstairs and hid behind a tapestry when he heard Lady Collingford coming out of her bedroom. Then Mrs Gowdie also hurried up with a poker. 'Are you all right, my lady?' she asked.

'I think so, Mrs Gowdie,' replied Lady Collingford. They both jumped at the sound of a distant crash.

Inspector Pugh had run round to the back of the house in answer to Davidson's signal, and, climbing into the sitting-room, had slipped on the window sill and fallen heavily to the floor.

Cedric joined Mrs Gowdie and his mother. 'Shall I go and see what's happening?' he asked.

'No dear,' said Lady Collingford, 'I'd rather you didn't. I feel there has been enough whistle blowing for one night I wonder if other people have such noisy burglaries?'

'Shall I make a nice pot of tea?' asked Mrs Gowdie, who regarded this as a universal panacea.

'No thank you,' said Lady Collingford, 'I'd much rather you both went back to bed, and that the Elderford Police Force would stop their manoeuvres and go home.'

In the sitting-room Inspector Pugh and Lord Collingford were staring at the cups on the mantelpiece. 'He must have repented at last,' said Pugh.

'Amazing,' said Lord Collingford, delighted to see his trophies again. 'The only thing that's missing is that creepy-looking inkwell, and I never cared for it anyway.' They were joined by P.C. Davidson. 'I've just found Williams,' he said breathlessly. 'Ted had clobbered him and pinched his uniform.'

'Is he all right?' asked Inspector Pugh.

'I think his pride's been hurt,' said Davidson.

'He's not the only one,' replied Pugh grimly.

Lord Collingford watched them drive away, and then went upstairs to bed, but Catweazle had already sought safety in Cedric's bedroom. Cedric wasn't very pleased to see him and told him so, but the magician simply curled up like a dog at the foot of his bed and fell asleep instantly. There was nothing Cedric could do except set the alarm clock so that he could let Catweazle out of the house early the next morning while the household was still fast asleep.

'Thanks for bringing everything back,' said Cedric, when he visited Duck Halt during the following afternoon. 'Well, nearly everything.'

Catweazle looked up from his book of magic. 'What dost thou mean?'

‘What about the inkwell?’

‘The ink... well?’

‘Yes. The creepy-looking inkwell.’

Catweazle grinned his crooked grin and held up a large crab made of silver gilt. He lifted the shell. Inside were two glass inkwells.

‘It’s the sign of the crab, isn’t it?’ said Cedric.

‘ ‘Tis so, Owlface,’ said Catweazle, ‘the Sign of the Crab.’

‘But I said no more stealing! !:

Catvveazle took the strange inkwell over to his Zodiac ring and placed it above the House of Cancer.

‘ ’Tis but borrowed, my brother,’ he said, ‘till I can fly...’

LEO

IT was a great moment in Catweazle's life when he discovered the Elderford rubbish dump. He gazed in wonder at all its marvels. Truly, he thought, this was a magic place with its thousands of mysterious food tins and its heavy pungent smell. He climbed on to the dump and started a little avalanche. Clouds of white ash rose into the still air like smoke and hundreds of dozing bluebottles woke and buzzed angrily round the ragged explorer. He found an old pram and began to load it with treasures. When it was full he tied it to the back of his tricycle and rode in triumph to Duck Halt.

The Sign of the Lion is hidden from me,' he said to Touchwood. 'But see the marvels the foolish sorcerers throw away.'

He pulled a broken clock from the pram. 'Ah, tyrant!' he exclaimed, 'thou hast lost thy power. Where is thy tack, tack, now? Thy bell will ring no more. No man will rise or sleep at thy command.'

An electric fire came next, followed by an umbrella and then a colander.

'This bowl will carry no water,' he muttered. 'Some loon hath pierced it with holes.'

Finally he brought out a mysterious-looking book and showed it to Touchwood. 'Dost think 'tis a book, my minion?' he asked. 'Mayhap, mayhap. Yet 'tis a mystery.' He shuffled over to the table and made a space for it among the mandrake roots.

It was an old-fashioned record album. He opened it and eventually managed to get the first record out of its cover. It had broken in half, but he fitted it together and peered through the little hole in the middle. 'Magic?' he whispered, wondering what strange power the black wheels held and called on the wise demons Adramalech, Nergal and Abraxas, to tell him. Even if they knew, none of them answered him, so he decided to go up to Kings Farthing and ask Owlface.

When Catweazle emerged from the bushes near the stables, Cedric was washing the family's ancient Rolls-' Royce and listening to Rostropovitch on his portable record player. Catweazle had never heard a cello before and wondered for a moment where the groaning noise was coming from. Then he began to stalk the record player, covering the last few yards on his hands and knees. Cedric saw him just as Mrs Gowdie appeared in the distance. Quickly he dragged him behind the car and then, with a sudden brainwave, he opened the boot and pushed the magician inside. He was just starting to wash the back window as Mrs Gowdie joined him.

'My goodness — you're quick!' she said.

'You have to be,' said Cedric.

‘Groome takes all day,’ said Mrs Gowdie. She listened to the record player for a moment. ‘That’s nice,’ she said, ‘does it help?’

‘Oh yes,’ said Cedric, washing furiously and wishing she would go before Catweazle suffocated.

‘There’s a proper car mop somewhere. I think it’s in the boot.’

‘Er... no it’s not,’ said Cedric hastily, ‘I’ve just looked.’

‘Oh! Well, I won’t interrupt you any longer,’ said Mrs Gowdie, and went on into the house, leaving Cedric to rescue Catweazle and bustle him into the comparative safety of the garage.

‘Why can’t you stay at Duck Halt?’ he asked.

‘Is the noise box thine?’ asked Catweazle.

‘The noise box?’ repeated Cedric. ‘Oh, you mean the record player. Yes, that’s mine.’

‘ ’Tis great magic. Is it the electrickery?’

‘Batteries,’ said Cedric. ‘One watt output.’

‘Put out one what?’

‘You must go, Catweazle — ’

‘Come, my brother. I have a marvel to show thee. Strange black wheels.’

‘I can’t come. Everything’s in chaos. Groome’s lost his voice.’

‘Where?’ asked Catweazle.

‘What d’you mean, where? Here of course,’ said Cedric irritably.

‘Hast searched for it?’

‘Searched for it!’

‘Ay. The lost voice of thy groom. If I find it for thee, wilt thou tell me the magic of the black wheels?’

‘What black wheels?’ said Cedric, but Catweazle was already running back to the car.

‘I need thy bucket,’ he said, ‘to put the voice in,’ and he ran off with the pail with Cedric chasing after him.

Groome’s laryngitis had turned the household upside down, and Lord and Lady Collingford were anxiously discussing the'problem.

‘Suppose the doctor can’t do anything?’ said Lord Collingford, pacing nervously up and down.

‘Then you’ll have to put General thing off,’ said Lady Collingford briskly.

‘General Buckhunter,’ said Lord Collingford. ‘I can’t do that, Dottie; he’s the President of the Historic Weapons Society and he is bringing them all tomorrow.’

‘The weapons?’

‘No, darling. The Society.’

Lady Collingford thought for a moment. ‘Then there’s only one thing to do,’ she said. ‘Find another guide.’

‘Another guide? Where on earth would we find another guide?’

Lady Collingford touched him gently. ‘Here, Charles,’ she purred.

Lord Collingford was not at all happy with this idea. He pointed out that Groome talked non-stop for forty minutes. He felt he hadn’t the training or the temperament to become a guide himself, but the more he tried to get out of it, the more insistent Lady Collingford became. ‘Who knows,’ she said, ‘you might even get a tip.’

Lord Collingford wasn’t sure whether it would be right to accept a tip for escorting people round his own house, but he finally agreed to stand in for Groome, provided he didn’t have to wear the peaked cap.

Meanwhile Catweazle had reached an old well, where Cedric finally caught up with him.

‘ ’Tis in there, my brother,’ whispered Catweazle.

‘What is?’ asked Cedric.

‘The lost voice,’ said Catweazle. ‘Harken!’ He crouched down by the well and peered over the top very carefully. ‘Good morrow,’ he said.

‘Good morrow,’ came back the echo.

Cedric hooted with laughter. In fact he laughed so much his glasses slid down his nose and nearly fell off.

‘Thou coxy, cackling candle!’ said Catweazle. ‘Why dost thou titter? Thou wilt mar all! ’Twill escape!’

‘You can’t put an echo into a bucket,’ laughed Cedric and took it away from him.

‘But ’tis the voice!’

‘No it’s not. It’s yours! Groome’s lost his because of laryngitis.’ ‘ ’Tis a demon I know not,’ said Catweazle, clearly disappointed at Cedric’s reaction.

‘Listen,’ explained Cedric, as they walked back through the woods, ‘when someone loses their voice it doesn’t mean they’ve lost their voice. It means... well... that they’ve — ’ Cedric pointed to his throat and whispered hoarsely — ‘lost their voice.’

‘Now thine hath gone!’ said Catweazle, very alarmed.

‘No it hasn’t!’ said Cedric loudly. ‘Now for goodness’ sake — go home!’

But Catweazle wouldn’t go home and he followed Cedric all the way back to the car.

‘Mayhap ’tis in thy house,’ he said helpfully.

‘I’ll go mad in a minute,’ muttered Cedric, wondering how to get rid of him. ‘Once and for all, you can’t have a voice without a body.’ He switched on the record player and a man’s voice began to sing.

‘Thou liest!’ said Catweazle and pointed a skinny finger at the box.

Cedric had to admit that the magician was right, so he opened the record player and showed him the revolving disc and the others poised above it on the auto-changer. ‘The voice is on there,’ he said.

Catweazle became tremendously excited and started his fizzing

noise. ‘The black wheels!’ he cried. ‘The lost voice! The black wheels!’

He capered wildly for a moment and then skipped off between the rose beds, his robe flapping round his bony legs.

Cedric watched him go, wondering what he was getting up to.

Catweazle went straight back to Touchwood and told him his discovery.

‘All is now clear, my minion,’ he chuckled and Touch-

wood’s amber eyes seemed to glow with understanding. ‘Trapped in these wheels,’ explained Catweazle, holding up a record, ‘are lost voices. Mayhap conjured from deep caves, from wells, or mighty cliffs, where such things live.’

He put the record in an old pudding basin and began breaking it into little pieces, using a rusty bicycle pump as a pestle. ‘The groom hath lost his voice, but he shall have another!’ he said as he pounded away. ‘He shall have this voice. All shall be well.’

When he was satisfied that the pieces of gramophone record were small enough, he scooped them into an empty tin, and then, leaving Touchwood on guard, he mounted his tricycle and rode back to Kings Farthing on his errand of mercy.

He was becoming quite expert on the old tricycle and had found that if he squeezed the springy black ball on the handlebars, it made a sound rather like the cry of a seagull. He kept off the main roads as much as he could because the roar of the magic chariots frightened him, and besides, he preferred to bump along across country. When he reached Kings Farthing, Cedric was standing outside the gatehouse waiting for the doctor to arrive.

‘Where is thy groom?’ asked Catweazle.

‘Will you go away!’ said Cedric, looking anxiously down the road.

‘Where is thy groom?’ repeated Catweazle and put his tricycle in the bushes.

Cedric pointed to the gatehouse. ‘He lives in there, if you must know, and he’s in bed. Now will you go — ’

Catweazle didn’t wait to hear any more. He ran into the gatehouse and looked round quickly. Cedric followed him and managed to stop him going into the bedroom.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ he whispered. ‘The doctor will be here at any minute and you’ll get caught.’

‘Unhand me, Owlface,’ said Catweazle angrily. ‘I have a voice for thy groom. See!’

Cedric was still looking staggered at the contents of the tin, when he heard the doctor’s car approaching the gatehouse. In a complete panic he ran outside but the car went on up the drive and when Cedric went back into the gatehouse he was too late to stop Catweazle slipping through the bedroom door.

The magician went straight to the bed and bent over the sleeping figure. Carefully scooping some pieces of record from the tin, he shook Groome gently. ‘Waken, O groom!’ he said.

Groome woke with a start and for a moment thought he was having a nightmare.

‘Thy voice cannot be found,’ said Catweazle. ‘But I have brought thee another.’ He began to recite an ancient spell to ward off evil spirits.

‘Ochnotinos
Chnotinos
Notinos
Tinos
Inos
Nos
Os’

Groome’s disbelief gave way to sheer terror. He tried to shout for help but no sound came. He jumped out of bed but Catweazle blocked his way and held up a spoonful of gramophone record. ‘Come, O groom, eat the voice I have prepared for thee,’ he said.

Groome tried to grab the spoon but Catweazle snatched it away quickly. ‘Nay,’ he insisted, ‘thou must eat.’

Groome picked up his pillow and hit Catweazle over the head with it. Bits of record went everywhere and Catweazle collapsed on to the bed. Groome rushed out of the door and hung grimly on to the doorknob to prevent the madman’s escape. He gestured wildly for Cedric to take over and then scribbled a note for him.

‘ “There’s a madman in there,” ’ read Cedric. ‘ “I am going to get his Lordship.” ’

This was the last thing Cedric wanted. ‘Couldn’t we just... er... let him go?’ he said lamely.

Groome shook his head wildly and remembered he had a key and locked the bedroom door. Then he pulled on his overcoat, and his cycle clips over his pyjamas, stuck his feet into a pair of old plimsolls and rushed outside to his bike.

At that moment, Lady Collingford was in the main hall re-directing Doctor Hawkins. Suddenly Lord Collingford came stalking through, practising his guided tour. He was concentrating so hard that he didn’t see them watching him.

‘This way, ladies and gentlemen,’ he said, leading an imaginary party of visitors into the gun room.

Doctor Hawkins gaped. ‘Er... my husband,’ whispered Lady Collingford.

‘Oh... yes... of course,’ said Doctor Hawkins sympathetically and hurried out to his car. He passed Groome half-way to the gatehouse but didn’t notice him.

When Cedric heard the car pulling up outside he tried to hide Catweazle but the magician ran back into the bedroom and dived under the blankets. Cedric felt the situation was now completely beyond him and all he could do was to open the door to Doctor Hawkins.

‘Are you Cedric?’ said the doctor.

‘That’s right.’

‘We seem to have got our wires a bit crossed.’

Cedric felt this was something of an understatement.

‘In here?’ said the doctor, going remorselessly towards the bedroom. Cedric nodded and watched helplessly as he went inside.

‘Good afternoon, Mr Groome,’ said Doctor Hawkins to the inert heap under the bedcovers,

There was no reply.

‘Feeling any better?’

The lump in the bed remained motionless.

‘Now do come out, there’s a good chap. I mean, I can’t do anything to help unless I have a look at you, Can I?’

Outside the door, Cedric listened and held his breath.

Doctor Hawkins tried to get the covers off his patient. His bedside manner was beginning to deteriorate. ‘I’ve other people to see, you know,’ he informed Catweazle who was still gripping the blankets tightly over his head. ‘Come on, man. You’re behaving very badly. Come out!’

Catweazle lowered the coverlet very slowly. ‘That’s... er... better,’ said the doctor, looking nervously at his patient’s wild and unkempt appearance. ‘I’ll just take your pulse.’

Catweazle looked blankly up at him.

The doctor sighed. ‘Just give me your hand, old chap.’

Catweazle clasped the doctor’s hand firmly. The man obviously wanted to make friends. The doctor eventually managed to release Catweazle’s grip and took his pulse.

‘Mmm,’ said the doctor, ‘sit up, please.’

Catweazle sat up and then watched the doctor shaking and tapping a thin icicle of glass. ‘Open wide,’ said the doctor.

Once again Catweazle looked blank. ‘Your mouth,’ said the doctor curtly. ‘Open it!’

Catweazle obeyed and the doctor popped in the thermometer. Catweazle spat it out immediately. The doctor sighed and felt Catweazle’s forehead instead.

‘Open wide again,’ he said.

Catweazle shut his mouth like a trap.

'I am not going to put anything in it,' said the doctor coldly. He held his tiresome patient by the nose, forcing Catweazle to open his mouth.

'It looks fairly normal,' said the doctor, somewhat puzzled. The covers had fallen back to reveal Catweazle's tattered robe. 'I... er... don't think you should wear your... er... dressing-gown in bed,' said the doctor.

He tried to listen to Catweazle's chest with his stethoscope but the magician blew down the other end.

'Don't do that!' bellowed the doctor.

Up at the house, Groome had rushed into the kitchen where Mrs Gowdie was ironing. 'Henry!' she exclaimed in alarm. 'What are you doing out of bed?'

Groome scribbled her a note. ' "He tried to make me eat a gramophone record," ' read Mrs Gowdie.

Groome nodded furiously. Mrs Gowdie didn't like the look of him at all. 'Stay here, Henry,' she said and ran to fetch help. Lord Collingford was nowhere to be found, but when she told Lady Collingford the story she was very concerned and together they hurried back to the kitchen.

'Hello Mr Groome,' said Lady Collingford in her most soothing voice, 'what was it the naughty doctor wanted you to eat?' Groome glared at her and began to scribble another note.

'I think I can cope with him,' whispered Lady Collingford, 'you'd better go and see what's happened to Doctor Hawkins.'

Doctor Hawkins was preparing an injection for Catweazle. The long needle frightened the magician and he began to tremble and fizz.

'Arm please,' said the doctor firmly.

'Nay! Nay!' howled Catweazle and leapt out of bed. 'Prick me not! I am no witch! Leave me be!'

'You can speak!' gasped the doctor and grabbed him, but Catweazle trod hard on his toe, pushed him backwards on to the bed, and ran out, almost knocking over Cedric as he made for the door and freedom.

By the time Doctor Hawkins recovered, Catweazle was already pedalling away across the fields, but Mrs Gowdie reached the gatehouse just as the doctor was limping to his car. 'Did he attack you?' she asked, very shocked that Groome had apparently become violent.

Doctor Hawkins nodded. 'We must find him. He may be dangerous,' he said.

'But he's sitting quietly in the kitchen, doctor,' said Mrs Gowdie.

Doctor Hawkins looked at her. Perhaps they were all mad at Kings Farthing. 'I don't think I can do any more at the moment,' he said,

rather shakily, ‘I’ve got another appointment, you see,’ and he drove off before she could reply.

It might have been the spell Catweazle recited, or just the shock he’d given Groome, but whichever it was, Groome’s voice did come back and, much to Lord Col-lingford’s relief, he was able to show General Buckhunter and the Historic Weapons Society round Kings Farthing the next day.

‘I swore to help thee, my brother,’ said Catweazle, as they sat on the platform outside Duck Halt in the early evening. Cedric had brought his record player, curious to hear Catweazle’s records.

‘You just got things a bit mixed up, that’s all.’

‘Thy magic is too hard.’

‘Never mind,’ said Cedric. ‘Shall we play your records?’

Catweazle handed him the album and Cedric took one out at random and examined it.

‘Gosh!’ he said, ‘the old Lion label. Not many of them about!’

He showed the record to Catweazle. In the centre there was a picture of a crouching lion.

‘The Lion!’ cried Catweazle. ‘ ’Tis the Sign of Leo! The Sign I seek.’ He waved it in the air.

‘Don’t drop it!’ warned Cedric. He took it from him and put it on his record player. It was a very scratchy old jazz record and in spite of the strong rhythm the tune was sad and pensive. For a moment they listened in silence, and then Catweazle stood up stiffly and started moving his feet in time to the music. Then waving his skinny arms he began to dance round the record player with a rapt and far-away look on his wrinkled face.

Cedric also jumped up and began to dance, and slowly the two of them jigged solemnly up and down the platform while the birds sang their accompaniment from the surrounding trees.

VIRGO

A large building company called Victor Industries Rehousing Group Organization wanted to build an estate on the outskirts of Elderford, but some of the land they wanted belonged to Lord Collingford. So Jack Victor, the Chairman of the company, drove down from London to open negotiations.

He didn't like the country. It was a bit primitive and untamed, he felt, and when he turned off the motorway and began to get lost in the tangle of country lanes he wished he was back in his comfortable office with three secretaries to look after him. When he eventually found Kings Farthing, and saw a small black cat curled up in the middle of the road, about a hundred yards from the main gate, it only confirmed his impression, for although he was a millionaire and a very powerful industrialist, Jack Victor was intensely superstitious and very frightened of black cats.

'Shoo!' he said, leaning out of the window and looking nervously at the cat. 'Go away!' He sounded the car horn several times, but the cat took no notice, so he picked up his radio telephone and asked for a number.

'Victor here,' he said, feeling somewhat reassured when his assistant in London answered him. 'I'm about a hun — er... some distance from Kings thingummy. Ring Lord Whatsisname and tell him I'm a bit held up, will you?'

He rang off and was still looking anxiously towards the cat when Catweazle came up the road carrying a divining rod. Jack Victor didn't like the look of him at all.

'What do you want?' he said.

'Gab gaba agaba,' said Catweazle, as he blew on his thumb-ring.

'If you're after some money,' said the millionaire, 'move that cat out of the way.'

Catweazle shook his head. 'Mayhap 'tis a fetch.'

Victor was very taken aback. 'A fetch?' he gulped. 'That's a witch in the shape of a cat, isn't it?'

'Ay,' said Catweazle calmly. 'We must wait.'

'But I can't wait! I've got an appointment!' said Jack Victor, drumming his fingers on the steering wheel.

Catweazle went up to the cat. He held his hands over it with spread fingers and recited a little spell.

'O witch depart
If fetch thou art.
Too long hast sat

If thou art cat.'

Then he squatted down in the road and stroked the cat three times very slowly and deliberately from its head to the tip of its tail. 'Yan, tan, tethera,' he counted.

The cat uncurled and stood up, arching its back. Then, sticking its tail in the air like a furry banner, it stalked off with contemptuous dignity.

' 'Twas but a blackberry cat,' said Catweazle.

The millionaire started the car and drove through the gates without a word.

He was received with a certain amount of caution by Lord and Lady Collingford, who were not used to business tycoons and were inclined to mistrust them.

'You won't know this area in five years,' said Victor, offering a huge cigar to Lord Collingford, which he hastily declined, 'two hundred thousand people will be living here.'

'How many?' said Lady Collingford faintly.

Jack Victor lit his cigar. 'Possibly three hundred thousand. Depends where we site the fish-glue factory.' He spread a map on Lord Collingford's desk. 'This is the plan. Here's Elderford and here's Kings thingummy.' 'Farthing,' said Lord Collingford coldly.

'Of course,' said Jack Victor smoothly.

'What's all that?' said Lord Collingford, pointing to an area marked in red.

'Houses, shops and offices.'

'But that's my land!'

'That's right.'

'Those houses would come right up to the moat!'

'Plant a row of trees,' said Jack Victor, sweeping the objections aside. 'Look, I'll come straight to the point. We want to buy two hundred and fifty-three acres.'

'It's not for sale,' said Lord Collingford firmly.

'The stars all pointed to this area,' Victor continued. 'And all the omens are good. Well, nearly all of them,' he . added. 'Now I don't expect you to rush into this without studying all the facts,' and he produced a thick report from his briefcase, 'but I would like your permission now to look over the land and let my surveyor make a few trial holes.'

'Trial holes?' said Lady Collingford.

'To check the ground. See there's no likelihood of subsidence. We're already digging on land adjoining your estate.'

Lord Collingford's heart sank. The building seemed inevitable.

'By the way,' said Victor, pointing at the map, 'how do I get to this

old railway station?'

Cedric, who had been pretending to be reading, looked up quickly. 'You don't mean Duck Halt, do you?'

'That's it,' said Victor, snapping his fingers, 'Duck Halt. I am going to have to buy it.'

'What for?' asked Cedric.

'So I can pull it down of course. There's an access road scheduled to go straight through it.'

Cedric stood up and shut his book. 'If you'll excuse me,' he said, 'I think I'd like to go for a walk.'

He ran all the way to Duck Halt and was surprised to see a freshly drawn pentacle on the door. As he went inside, an arrow whistled out of the darkness and thudded into the woodwork only inches away from him. 'Hey!' cried Cedric in alarm.

'Pardon, Owlface! Pardon!' called Catweazle, bustling out from behind an old weighing machine. ' 'Twas not meant for thee.'

'Well it jolly nearly got me,' said Cedric, pulling the arrow from the door. 'What on earth's the matter?' Catweazle told him. His book of magic had said that a hidden spring would lead him to the Sign of the Maiden, he explained, and while he had been dowsing for water in the woods, he had fallen into a deep pit. He was sure it had been dug to catch him, especially when several men with picks and shovels had hauled him out, so he had run away from them and was now preparing for a siege.

Cedric tried to explain about the trial holes and the estate Jack Victor intended to build. 'They're going to pull this place down,' he said.

'I shall not go from hence, till I have all the Signs,' said Catweazle grimly.

'They'll make you,' said Cedric.

'Make me? I that escaped from the Normans?'

'I wouldn't go bragging about that if I were you,' said Cedric. 'I mean it's not *really* your place, is it? And if they catch you here, they might make you live somewhere else.' A dreadful vision of Catweazle in an old people's home flashed into his mind. 'Somewhere... well... not nice.'

'Not nice?'

'So we've got to stop them.'

'We will, my brother. By magic.'

'What magic?'

Catweazle's eyes glittered. 'The power of the wogle-stone,' he said, with quiet menace.

'The what stone?'

'Dost thou not know of the wogle-stone?'

Cedric shook his head. Catweazle sighed at the young sorcerer's lack of knowledge. 'Set one in thy fields,' he said. 'Call on Hecate, and no one will come near.'

'What does it look like?'

'Like . . like...' Catweazle made boulder-like gestures in the air, 'like a wogle-stone, thou gowk!'

Cedric polished his glasses. 'You mean we just plonk down a great lump of stone in the middle of nowhere and all the builders and bricklayers pack up and go home?'

' "No man can build where stands the wogle-stone," ' quoted Catweazle.

'But suppose they don't know that,' said Cedric. Catweazle called Touchwood forth from his rubber boot and put him in his pocket. Then he picked up the divining rod.

'I thought that was for water,' said Cedric.

'Water, ay... and wogle-stones,' said Catweazle mysteriously.

Cedric felt that it would take more than magic, even Catweazle's magic, to stop Jack Victor, but anything was worth trying, so he followed Catweazle in his search for the special stone.

The divining rod eventually led them to the rockery at Kings Farthing. Although they couldn't be seen from the house, there was always a chance Groome might be pottering about, and this made Cedric very uneasy.

'The whole idea's crazy,' he said, 'how can a stone stop a housing estate?'

Catweazle didn't answer but the forked stick in his hands began twitching again, so he put it down and ad-vanced on the rockery with Touchwood in his out-stretched hand. The toad began to croak and Catweazle fizzed with excitement. ' 'Tis here! 'Tis here! I feel it$_s$ power,' he cried, and put his gnarled hands on one of the rocks.

'But it's just like all the others,' said Cedric, a little disappointed.

'Goggle-eyed gall-fly! Canst thou not feel its power?' snapped Catweazle. He started tugging furiously at the stone and Cedric reluctantly began to help him.

They lifted it for a moment, but its weight was too much for them and they were forced to drop it. It rolled towards Catweazle, who leapt out of the way with a frightened shriek. 'You nearly felt its power then,' grinned Cedric.

Groome's old wheelbarrow stood near by, so they put it as close as they could to the wogle-stone, and managed to lift it in. Then Catweazle put Touchwood on the stone and they began to trundle the wheelbarrow towards the future building site.

It was hard work and progress was extremely slow. The wogle-stone seemed to weigh a ton and the wheel of the wheelbarrow dug quite

deeply into the ground, making it even harder to push. On and on they went, stopping every few yards to rest and get back their breath. Cedric began to think that they would never make it, but he stumbled on, refusing to be the first to give in.

After what seemed like years they reached the site and with a last great effort, heaved the stone from the wheelbarrow and collapsed on the ground. Catweazle panted like an old dog.

'Now what?' asked Cedric, when he began to recover.

'We wait,' gasped Catweazle.

'What for?'

'To see the power of the wogle.'

'Suppose Mr Victor doesn't come?'

'Ah, but he doth,' replied Catweazle, tapping his forehead. 'I see him now.'

'Where?' said Cedric, looking down the lane.

'In the Eye of Time, thou empty egg,' retorted Catweazle.

He began to draw two sets of concentric circles on the stone. They were rather like eyes and gave it a most peculiar look. 'Like a prehistoric animal,' thought Cedric. Then they took cover behind a hedge as Jack Victor's car drove up followed by a small truck.

‘This is all Collingford’s land,’ said Jack Victor, slamming the door of his car.

The surveyor, a tough-looking man called Richardson, jumped out of the truck followed by his men.

‘We’ll chop these woods down, of course, and flatten the hill with bulldozers,’ Victor went on.

Richardson was looking curiously at the wogle-stone. ‘What on earth’s that thing?’ he said.

They all clustered round it.

‘Touch not the wogle-stone,’ cried Catweazle, rising from cover and brandishing the divining rod.

‘The what?’ stammered Jack Victor.

‘Oh, it’s you again, is it?’ said Richardson grimly. He turned to Victor. ‘We’ve had trouble with him already in the woods,’ he said and moved threateningly towards Catweazle.

‘Er... wait a minute Walter, don’t upset him,’ said Victor hurriedly.

> ‘He that doth touch the wogle-stone
> Soon all alone will groan and moan.’

Catweazle went on, while Cedric watched, fascinated, from the safety of the hedge.

‘I don’t like the sound of that,’ said Victor uneasily.

‘Thou must not move it,’ said Catweazle.

‘Well, it’ll have to be moved some time,’ said Jack Victor apologetically. ‘The supermarket’s going to be built just here.’

‘He’s out of his mind,’ said Richardson angrily.

‘Move it at thy peril,’ said Catweazle.

Richardson went red with rage. ‘Are you threatening me?’ he said. ‘A big housing estate is going up here and it’ll take more than that overgrown pebble to stop it.’

‘Don’t antagonize him,’ said Victor nervously, ‘that... er... stone could be an omen.’

Richardson was thoroughly exasperated. ‘Omens! Signs! the blooming stars! This is a building site, not a fairy ring!’

‘We don’t need to move it right now,’ said Jack Victor, not wishing to take any chances.

But Richardson was determined to move it, so Jack Victor slunk back to his car where he sat nervously biting his fingernails. As the men lifted the wogle-stone, the light flashed on his radio telephone; it was his secretary in London phoning to tell him a big deal had just fallen through and, as a result, the firm had lost thousands of pounds.

‘Put it back! Put it back!’ shouted Victor, scrambling out of the car and running to where the men stood holding the wogle-stone. ‘We’ve

just lost the Welsh contract because of that thing!'

'Coincidence!' snorted Richardson.

'Move that stone and you're fired,' said Jack Victor.

The men put it back very quickly. As they did so Catweazle's divining rod began to twitch and he became very excited. 'Water!' he cried, 'I have found the hidden spring!'

He walked away, the forked stick trembling and turning in his hands. Cedric watched as Victor and the others began to follow him.

'It's an underground river!' exclaimed Victor, 'that means we couldn't build here anyway!'

'Are you going to take this old idiot's word for it?' said Richardson, though Catweazle's divining rod went on twitching and trembling.

Victor nodded. 'He said no man could build where stands the wogle-stone. Well, now he's proved it.'

'But I'm the surveyor to this firm,' said Richardson somewhat desperately. 'I'm sure there's no underground river.'

Victor looked coldly at him. 'The Elderford project is shelved.' he said. 'Permanently.'

Richardson had the sense to realize that it was useless to argue, and he and his men drove off. Jack Victor gave a last worried glance at the wogle-stone and, hoping that it had been sufficiently placated, he went back to tell the Collingfords about the underground river.

'No doubt about it,' he said to them, 'according to my surveyor, these old water diviners really know their stuff.' Cedric and Catweazle were triumphant. The wogle-stone had worked. So had the divining rod.

Catweazle began to dig for his spring with a discarded pick, convinced he would find the spring. ' 'Twillleadme to the Sign of the Maiden,' he muttered as he hacked away.

He hadn't dug down very far when, all of a sudden, water spurted up from the hole and poured over him. 'The spring! The hidden spring!' he cackled.

Cedric roared with laughter. 'Hidden spring, my foot!' he spluttered. 'You've hit an old water main!'

When Jack Victor left Kings Farthing late that evening, he and the Collingford family had become surprisingly good friends. As he slowed down to go through the gate Catweazle stepped out of the shadows. Victor stopped the car and wound down the window.

'I can't thank you enough for finding that underground river.'

' 'Twas naught,' replied Catweazle truthfully. 'Anyway,' said Victor, 'the... er... next time you're in Town — look me up,' and he gave Catweazle his card and drove back to the safe world of traffic jams, computers and office blocks.

Catweazle stared at the card for a long time. In the top left-hand

corner was the emblem of the company — a young woman holding up an ear of corn. The stranger had given him the Sign of the Maiden! Underneath it were the letters V.I.R.G.O., which Catweazle was unable to read, and which, of course, were the initials of Victor Industries Rehousing Group Organization.

‘Come, infernal, terrestrial and celestial demons. Come Mar bas, Nebrios, and Glasyabalos — servants of the Zodiac, Spirits of the Brazen Vessel. Show thyselves!’ chanted Catweazle, quite worn out. He had spent three days and nights at the station conjuring demons to help him in his quest, but so far not one of them had appeared.

‘Lead me to the Sign of the Balances.’ He waved his wand over the Sacred Fire in the red bucket and threw a handful of dried herbs on the flames. The fire began to throw out such clouds of foul-smelling smoke that Catweazle was forced to pick up his familiar and run out on to the platform. ‘Nothing works!’ he coughed, wiping his eyes and wondering how he would ever find the next magic Sign.

Catweazle wasn’t the only unsuccessful one that morning. In the sitting-room at Kings Farthing, Groome and Lord Collingford were struggling with the television set, which was flickering and humming. ‘I don’t know what you’ve done to it, my lord,’ said Groome, as he fiddled with the knobs.

‘I haven’t done anything to it,’ said Lord Collingford, giving it a bang. The humming stopped abruptly.

‘Well you have now,’ said Groome. ‘The sound’s gone. You need a qualified engineer for this,’ he said and banged it on the other side.

‘But I shall miss the match! Can’t you do anything?’

Groome shook his head. ‘They don’t last forever,’ he said. ‘Not without being carefully maintained.’

‘Are you suggesting we oil it,’ said Lord Collingford coldly.

‘No, my lord,’ replied Groome. ‘I’m suggesting we leave it to warm up for an hour. Like we did for the Grand National.’

Lord Collingford agreed, and went off to the drawingroom where Lady Collingford was busy with a rather tedious visitor.

She’d been invited by the Town Council to unveil a statue they had commissioned from John Gobling, a famous sculptor who lived just on the edge of the Kings Farthing estate. He had called round to see her before the ceremony took place and was showing her photographs of his other work.

‘And that’s my “Creation of Man”,’ he said as he handed her another photograph from a pile on the drawing-room floor. Lady Collingford stifled a yawn. He had already been there for two hours.

‘Twenty-five feet high,’ the sculptor droned on. ‘Reinforced concrete, of course.’

He was a large, untidy man, with a big black beard. He wore a polo-necked sweater under a shapeless tweed suit with bulging pockets. ‘What do you think of it?’ he asked Lady Collingford.

‘Er... very powerful,’ she said.

Cedric came in with some coffee, followed by his father. ‘That’s “The Creation of Man”, darling,’ she said giving the photograph to Lord Collingford who looked at it upside down.

‘How about this one,’ Gobling went on, handing her yet another photograph. ‘ “Hercules”, Bogata Railway Terminus, 1950. Fibreglass and polyurethane.’

‘That’s... er... powerful too... isn’t it?’

‘Very,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘By the way,’ said Lady Collingford, ‘has the new statue got a name?’

‘Themis,’ replied Gobling, ‘Greek, of course.’

‘Of course,’ said Lady Collingford.

Cedric put down the coffee and beat a hasty retreat. Catweazle had arrived at Kings Farthing and was looking for Cedric. He peered through the sitting-room window and his attention was caught by a blue light flashing and flickering from a box in the corner. He drew Adamcos, and climbed through the window. Here was magic indeed!

He was nearing the strange box when it made a rude noise at him and he jumped back as a face suddenly appeared in it; a pale and milky face which looked fiercely at him.

Catweazle sank to his knees. It was obviously a demon.

‘Stop, I command thee!’ it said hollowly.

‘Gab gaba agaba,’ muttered Catweazle.

‘There was a long pause,’ said the demon. ‘Nobody dared to move.’ Catweazle almost stopped breathing.

‘You are in my power — ’

‘Mercy!’ said Catweazle.

‘Said the wizard,’

‘Mercy O demon!’

‘- and I shall turn you into stone,’ the demon continued. Catweazle prostrated himself, hoping to placate it.

‘Slowly the king, the queen and all the courtiers, began to turn to stone,’ said the demon. Catweazle fizzed in terror and felt his arms and legs.

‘And then, without another word, the wizard vanished,’ it went on.

Catweazle realized he was not going to be harmed, and so he sat back on his haunches in front of the television set and listened intently.

‘What now? How could the spell be broken?’ asked the demon.

‘I know not, O demon,’ said Catweazle humbly.

‘And the evil wizard punished?’

‘Where doth he live?’ asked Catweazle.

‘Can you guess?’

‘Nay — tell me, O demon.’

‘Tomorrow I shall be here again with — ’ The demon stopped abruptly and his face melted into flashes of lightning.

‘Come back, O demon,’ Catweazle cried. ‘Not on the morrow — tell me now!’ He looked behind the box but the demon wasn’t there. This annoyed Catweazle. It was rude of the demon to vanish so abruptly.

‘Come from thy house, O demon,’ said Catweazle, rapping angrily on the television set. ‘I know thou art in there.’

With a burst of static the picture reappeared. Catweazle staggered back as a train raced towards him. It was the dragon from the mighty cave! Panic-stricken he rushed from the room and bumped into Cedric who had come to investigate the noise.

‘The dragon! The dragon!’ moaned Catweazle, clutching him in fear.

‘Be quiet!’ hissed Cedric, hearing Gobling and his parents going towards the main hall.

Gobling was still talking about his sculpture. ‘Stone’s so permanent, you see,’ he droned on. ‘If I turned you into stone, you’d last for a thousand years.’

Catweazle gripped Cedric’s arm. ‘ ’Tis he — ’tis he!’ he whispered frantically.

‘Well, not all of you, perhaps.’ Gobling went on. ‘Just your head. A nice granite head would suit you.’

‘Er — yes,’ said Lord Collingford as they went outside.

Catweazle turned to Cedric. ‘I will blast him,’ he said fiercely.

‘Who? Gobling?’

‘ ’Tis no goblin — ’tis the wizard!’

‘Listen,’ said Cedric, ‘I really think you ought to go back to Duck Halt and lie down for a bit.’

But Catweazle’s blood was up. He was determined to destroy the power of the evil wizard as the demon had told him, so he hurried after Gobling to the old water mill, where he had his studio, calling on all the demons of destruction to help him. Catweazle was appalled to see several human figures standing motionless under the trees. It took him some time to find the courage to go any closer but eventually he looked round the half-open door. The wizard was nowhere to be seen, but the poor stony king, of whom the pale demon had spoken, was standing in the middle of the chamber. There were also several heads on curious little tables. Catweazle dared not think what the wizard had done with the bodies.

He approached the enchanted king — an unfinished statue of Henry VI — and addressed it nervously. ‘Fear not, O king!’ he said in a hoarse whisper. ‘A demon hath sent me to release thee. Schempamporasch!’ he exclaimed and waved Adamcos at the statue, but the Word of Power was useless.

‘Breathe again and melt the stone
Be thou once more flesh and bone.’

said Catweazle trying another spell.

Gobling heard the unearthly chanting and came out from his other workroom, wearing plaster-covered overalls. ‘What d’you think you’re up to?’ he said angrily. Catweazle’s knees gave way and he sank to the floor, quickly drawing a circle around himself with the blade of his magic knife. ‘Naught, O great one!’ he moaned.

‘On the scrounge, are you?’ said Gobling. ‘Shouldn’t think you’ve ever done a day’s work in your life.’

‘I beg — I beg — ’ stammered Catweazle.

‘Yes, I bet you do,’ Gobling interrupted. ‘Begging’s easy isn’t it? Just as long as someone’s fool enough to fall for it.’

‘Mercy!’

‘A social parasite — that’s what you are. You’ll earn any money I give you. Understand?’

Catweazle didn’t, but he nodded furiously just to please him.

‘Right,’ said Gobling, ‘see that broom?’

Catweazle nodded. ‘Ay, O mighty one!’

‘Get it!’

Catweazle scurried to fetch the broom.

‘Now sweep up!’

Catweazle looked at the ceiling.

‘The floor, you fool!’ roared Gobling.

Catweazle began to sweep the floor as if his life depended on it, and Gobling started to mix plaster at the sink.

Catweazle swept his way over to the statue. ‘Patience, O king,’ he whispered, ‘I shall set thee free!’

‘What was that?’ said Gobling sharply, still stirring his bucket of plaster.

Catweazle bent hurriedly over the broom again. Gobling loaded some plaster on to a board and went over to the king. Using a spatula he started to work on one of the legs.

‘Bring the steps!’ he ordered. Catweazle dropped the broom and skeltered to fetch them. But he tripped over a lump of plaster and the ladder crashed against a head and smashed it into pieces.

Gobling uttered a roar of fury and hurled his plasterer’s board at Catweazle, who got enough plaster on his chest to convince him that his time had come. ‘Not into stone!’ he howled, backing into another head which also went crashing to the floor. ‘Not into stone!’

‘You maniac!’ yelled Gobling. ‘I’ll murder you!’

The furious sculptor charged towards him, and Catweazle picked up a bucket full of wet plaster from the draining board and hurled it

straight at him. Gobling got most of it in the face, skidded on the rest and sat down heavily. Plaster dropped from his beard and he bellowed incoherently and beat the floor.

Catweazle ran outside and, for the second time that day, bumped into Cedric, who had been sent to return Gobling's photographs. 'Catweazle!'

'Hide me from the wizard!' cried Catweazle.

Cedric looked around desperately. The only hiding place was the sculptor's battered van, and he just had time to push Catweazle inside before Gobling came roaring out of his studio.

'Where is he?' he shouted. 'I'll tear him apart!'

'Who?' asked Cedric, playing for time.

Gobling wiped the plaster from his face and beard. 'He must be hiding somewhere,' he said. 'He's wrecked my studio.'

'Er... you left your pictures,' said Cedric hastily.

'What?' said the sculptor. 'Oh... thanks.' He began to calm down a little. There was clearly no sign of the tramp. 'Frightened him off, I suppose,' said Gobling.

'Looks like it,' said Cedric.

Gobling wiped spots of plaster from his watch. 'The unveiling! I'd almost forgotten about it!' He climbed out of his boiler suit. 'Are you coming?' he said, going over to his little van.

'Aren't you going to change?' said Cedric quickly.

'No time,' said Gobling. 'Get in.' And they drove off to the Elderford Law Courts, with Catweazle cowering under a sheet in the back.

Lord and Lady Collingford were already arriving in the old Rolls. Because it was a special occasion Groome was driving it, dressed in a chauffeur's uniform that was really much too tight for him. The Mayor and other dignitaries of the Borough welcomed them, and the little party walked slowly to the gardens behind the Law Courts where a large crowd of people had collected. At the end of a lawn, in front of a group of rhododendron bushes, stood Gobling's latest work of art, surrounded by curtained scaffolding.

Then Gobling and Cedric arrived. The sculptor, still trying to get plaster from his beard, took his place on the platform with Lord and Lady Collingford. Everyone was rather surprised at the state he was in.

The Mayor rose to open the ceremony. 'My lord, ladies and gentlemen,' he said, unctuously, 'as you know, we are here today for the unveiling of a statue, the work of Mr John Gobling, whom we are glad to welcome this afternoon.'

There was polite applause. Cedric went stealthily back to the van to free Catweazle. When he reached it, the doors were open and the back of the van was empty.

Catweazle had managed to open the doors of the van, and had

become lost between the rows of parked cars. Groome saw him from the Rolls and set off in pursuit of the madman who had once tried to make him eat a gramophone record.

When Catweazle saw Groome he gave him the slip by crawling under some rhododendron bushes, then came face to face with a curious tent-like structure. Someone was talking quite loudly on the other side of it. Her voice sounded familiar, but, he was so intrigued by the strange tent that he drew Adamcos and crawled inside, only to find another victim of the evil wizard! A young woman fiad been turned to stone, but when Catweazle saw what she held in her frozen grasp, he could hardly believe his good fortune. The unhappy creature was blindfolded and held the Sign of Libra — the Balances. This was the magic Sign he sought!

He climbed on the pedestal, little knowing that on the other side of the curtain Lady Collingford was nearing the end of her speech. ‘And so, Mr Mayor, ladies and gentlemen — ’ she said and then paused. There were bumps and fizzing noises coming from behind the curtained scaffolding. She smiled nervously. ‘I unveil Themis, the Greek Goddess of Law — ’ Under the curtains, Catweazle was pulling frantically at the scales and the statue was beginning to rock on its pedestal.

‘Better known to all of us as Justice,’ continued Lady Collingford. She looked anxiously at the Mayor and took hold of a cord. ‘Long may she hold sway,’ she said, and pulled.

There was a terrible crash as the statue toppled to the ground. The curtains fell away from the scaffolding and revealed Catweazle, still covered in plaster, standing on the pedestal with Adamcos in one hand and the scales of Justice in the other. For a moment he stood paralysed with fear; then, as Gobling went completely berserk and Groome suddenly appeared through the rhododendron bushes behind him, Catweazle jumped down and ran forward into the astonished audience. They fell over each other in their eagerness to get out of his way. Groome and Gobling tried to chase him, but the milling crowd made it impossible. Policemen blew whistles, women fainted, and there was total confusion.

The evening paper carried an interesting headline and Cedric took it to Duck Halt to show Catweazle. ‘ “Mystery man K.O.’s Justice,” ’ he read. ‘ “Rag-students deny all knowledge.” ’

Catweazle wasn’t at all interested. ‘The Sign of the Balances,’ he said, holding up the scales. ‘My power grows stronger.’

‘Oh Catweazle, what am I going to do with you?’ sighed Cedric.

‘ ’Twas the demon in thy demon-box led me to it.’

‘My demon-box?’ said Cedric. ‘You don’t mean the TV set do you?’

‘Nay, Owlface, thy demon-box. Would that I had one,’ said Catweazle wistfully.

‘You’d never get any magic done then,’ smiled Cedric.

Catweazle put the scales down above the House of Libra on the Zodiac ring and opened his magic book. Cedric looked at the spiky squiggles. ‘Could you teach me to read that?’ he asked hesitantly.

Catweazle looked at him and picked up the newspaper. ‘Ay, if thou wilt teach me also,’ he said.

‘O.K..’ said Cedric. ‘You ought to. It’s about time.’ ‘About Timé?’ repeated Catweazle, looking at the broken clock. ‘Then I will learn thy magic.’

‘And I’ll learn yours,’ said Cedric. Perhaps there was something in it after all. Perhaps Catweazle’s magic could lead him to the lost treasure.

Catweazle was very upset because Touchwood was ill. He was off his food and crouched inside the boot hour after hour.

Catweazle tried every healing spell in the book to help him but none of them made Touchwood any better and at last he decided to take him to Kings Farthing, hoping that Owlface might have some New Magic which could help.

Because Catweazle was so worried about his familiar, he was less careful than usual, and Lady Collingford, out for a morning walk, caught a glimpse of him as he hurried through the woods. She was very alarmed and went straight back to tell her husband what she had seen.

'Charles,' she said to Lord Collingford, 'you must do something.'

Lord Collingford, who was supervising the preparations for a lecture that afternoon, was surprised to see her looking so distraught. 'What's the matter, Dottie darling?' he asked.

'I've seen that old man again!' she said.

'What old man?' asked Lord Collingford.

'The one at the unveiling. The one who knocked over the statue.'

Groome and Cedric, who were putting out the chairs, stopped to listen. 'He was in the woods. Talking to a boot.'

'A boot?' exclaimed Lord Collingford.

'Yes, Charles. A rubber boot.'

Groome cleared his throat. 'Haven't I said something peculiar's going on?' he remarked to no one in particular.

'There are always a few tramps this time of year,' said Lord Collingford.

'I'll have a look round,' said Groome grimly.

'Er... so will I,' said Cedric quickly.

Luckily for Catweazle, Cedric saw him first. The magician was hurrying, bent double, along the hedge that skirted the kitchen garden.

'You've been seen again!' said Cedric.

'I need thy help,' said Catweazle. 'Touchwood is sick. My magic cannot cure him.'

Cedric stopped being angry at once. This was clearly an emergency. 'What's wrong with him?'

Catweazle had just taken the toad from the boot to show Cedric, when the boy saw Groome approaching and pulled Catweazle behind the hedge. Silently, the two of them crept away to the comparative safety of a derelict greenhouse.

'I think we're O.K. here,' said Cedric, leading Catweazle inside.

It was a melancholy place with rows of dead bedding plants and rusty iron pipes. Catweazle brushed away pieces of broken glass and put Touchwood down on the cold tiled floor.

'He would not eat his bluebottle,' he said.

'Gosh!' said Cedric. 'He must be ill!'

'Mayhap he is bewitched.'

'Of course he's not. He's just a bit off colour, that's all.'

'Ay,' agreed Catweazle. 'He hath a yellow look.'

Touchwood remained inert, and stared fixedly ahead with dull-eyed fatality.

'Maybe it's jaundice,' Cedric sighed. 'I wish I knew more about toads.'

'I will fetch leeches,' suggested Catweazle.

'No, you'd better not,' said Cedric hastily. 'He might eat them.'

'Hast thou no potion?' demanded Catweazle desperately. 'What is a magician, if he hath no familiar? How shall I find the Sign of the Scorpion? How shall I fly?' He began to rock backwards and forwards on his knees, moaning and wringing his hands. 'Without Touchwood I am lost!'

'Oh, do shut up!' said Cedric. 'He's going to be O.K. You talk as if he's had it.'

'Had what?' asked Catweazle, suspiciously.

'I suppose we could take him to the vet,' said Cedric dubiously.

Touchwood turned his back on them.

'Wait a minute!' said Cedric. 'There's a zoologist in Maybury. Why didn't I think of him before! Professor... Habbleman's his name.'

Some time later, they walked into the outskirts of Maybury. Cedric had found an old coat and hat of his father's which he had forced Catweazle to wear, hoping it would make him less noticeable.

As they crossed the road to Habbleman's house, Cedric yanked Catweazle back on to the pavement just as he was about to be mown down by a passing milk-float.

'Look both ways!' said Cedric angrily.

Catweazle looked behind him and then straight ahead again.

'No,' said Cedric. 'Look right, look left, look right again.'

'What sayest thou?'

Cedric demonstrated. 'Now cross,' he said.

Catweazle crossed his fingers.'

'The road, you idiot!'

Catweazle made an imaginary X at the road ahead, while Cedric grabbed him and hurried him over to the house.

'Now don't forget,' said Cedric. 'If he asks who you are, you're a visitor... from overseas.'

He rang the bell and presently the door was opened by a bald-

headed man who squinted nervously at them through thick pebbled glasses.

'Professor Habbleman?' asked Cedric politely.

'I am he,' said the Professor, staring at the boot Catweazle was holding.

'I hope you don't mind us calling on you like this, but we thought you might help — '

'Why are you carrying that boot?' asked the Professor uneasily.

' 'Tis Touchwood,' said Catweazle.

'Touch... wood?' said Habbleman.

'Touchwood!' repeated Catweazle fiercely.

Professor Habbleman touched the door hastily.

'He's ill, you see,' explained Cedric.

'Is he?' said Habbleman, looking at Catweazle.

'He wouldn't eat his bluebottle,' said Cedric.

'I don't think he should,' said Habbleman.

Catweazle held out the boot. ' 'Tis all I have,' he said sadly.

Professor Habbleman backed nervously. 'I don't want it,' he said, 'I've a pair of my own.' And he started to shut the door.

'It's a toad,' said Cedric desperately.

Habbleman came out again. 'A toad?' he said, suddenly looking interested.

'In this boot,' said Cedric.

Habbleman peered myopically into the boot. 'He's probably gone round the corner,' said Cedric pointing at the foot while Catweazle tipped the boot and made Touchwood slide into the heel.

‘Ah, now I see him,’ muttered Habbleman. He looked up. ‘What’s the matter with him?’

‘We don’t know,’ said Cedric. ‘That’s why we brought him to you.’

‘Very wise,’ said Professor Habbleman. ‘You had better come inside.’

He led them towards his study, a large room, simply stuffed with books. The only clear spaces between the bookshelves were occupied by large photos and drawings of frogs and toads in every stage of development.

Professor Habbleman sat down at a long bench and carefully put Touchwood on a glass dish. The toad’s legs skated feebly against the surface but he was too weak even to crawl. ‘You say he will not eat,’ said the professor, examining Touchwood through a large magnifying glass. Catweazle peered over his shoulder and was amazed to see that his familiar had become a giant. Hab-bleman put the glass down and Touchwood reverted to his normal size. Gingerly, Catweazle picked up the magnifying glass and peered through it. The professor’s ear became the size of a dinner plate. Then, as he turned to Catweazle, the magician backed away from the huge eye that glared coldly at him through the glass.

Habbleman took it away from him and looked at Touchwood again. Catweazle gasped as Touchwood became a giant once more.

‘No sign of greenbottle,’ muttered Habbleman. He looked up at them. ‘Lucilia Bufonivora,’ he explained.

‘Gab gaba agaba,’ said Catweazle, crossing his fingers at the magic words.

‘Gab gaba agaba?’ repeated Habbleman in a puzzled tone.

‘Well?’ said Cedric quickly. ‘What’s wrong with him?’

‘Patience my friend. Patience.’

He examined Touchwood again and drew in his breath. Then he straightened up with a rather dazed expression on his knobbly features. ‘It cannot be,’ he whispered, ‘it cannot be.’

‘Jaundice?’ asked Cedric.

Habbleman bent over Touchwood again. ‘Impossible!’ he said excitedly. ‘I do not believe it. Quite impossible!’

Catweazle sensed that something unexpected was happening and began fizzing again as Habbleman quickly fetched a very old book to the bench. Was the magician about to cast a spell?

‘ “Androvandus”,’ said Habbleman, pointing to the lettering on the spine. ‘ “De Quadrupedibus Digitatis Ovi-paris”.’

‘Schempamporasch!’. said Catweazle, crossing his fingers.

Habbleman began to search feverishly through the book, making the dust rise as he turned the thick yellow pages. Cedric and Catweazle stared at each other apprehensively.

At last, Habbleman appeared to be satisfied and closed the book. He

removed his glasses, wiped his forehead and turned to them, his eyes shining with triumph. ‘How long have you had this toad?’ he said.

‘Nine hun — ’ began Catweazle.

‘Quite a long time,’ Cedric interrupted.

‘Ay,’ said Catweazle.

Cedric sighed with relief.

‘Nine hundred years,’ said Catweazle.

But luckily Habbleman was too busy examining Touchwood to hear this last remark. Then he put his glasses on again and turned back to them.

‘This toad does not exist,’ he said. ‘The last known toad of this species is mentioned by Androvandus.’ He thumped the book. ‘Published in 1637. Therefore, like the dinosaur,’ he pointed at Touchwood, ‘that toad is extinct!’

‘How do you know?’ said Cedric.

‘The length of the femur,’ said Habbleman.

‘Oh,’ said Cedric.

‘And the absence of parotid glands,’ Habbleman added.

‘Oh,’ said Cedric. ‘Yes.’

‘Today we have made natural history!’ Habbleman continued, lifting Touchwood with reverence. ‘A toad from the past!’

‘Ay,’ said Catweazle.

‘I must fly to Heidelberg!’

‘Fly!’ said Catweazle, kneeling at his feet. ‘Hast thou the thirteen Signs?’

‘I shall address the Zoological Congress,’ said Habbleman, taking no notice of the ragged figure at his feet.

‘O mighty one,’ begged Catweazle, ‘let me fly with thee!’

Habbleman looked down. ‘No,’ he said hastily, ‘I think I had better go alone.’

Suddenly he looked at his watch. ‘Ach! I am forgetting. I am forgetting!’ he cried. T shall be late... late.’ He panicked and ran out into the hall.

‘Get Touchwood!’ hissed Cedric.

Catweazle reached out for him but Habbleman reappeared with a long black box and a small case. He came swiftly over to the bench and popped Touchwood into a little wicker-work basket. ‘Nearly forgot him,’ he said.

‘But Professor — ’ Cedric began.

‘Thank you again,’ said Habbleman, shaking them by the hand. ‘Can I give you a lift anywhere?’

Cedric shook his head miserably.

They went outside and watched helplessly as Habbleman drove away.

‘Heidelberg,’ groaned Cedric.

‘Who is Heidelberg?’ howled Catweazle, distraught at the loss of his familiar.

‘Where is Heidelberg,’ corrected Cedric sadly. ‘It’s a place in Germany.’

Catweazle looked at the sky. ‘O that I had the thirteen Signs!’ he cried. ‘I would fly to Heidelberg! I would conjure the Spirits of the Brazen Vessel! I would unleash the great Asmoday!’ He shook his fists in impotent fury as one of the roaring sky-fish of the New Magic passed overhead.

There was nothing they could do, so they trudged wearily back to Kings Farthing.

When they reached the house people were beginning to arrive for the afternoon’s lecture, so Cedric went indoors, after attempting to reassure Catweazle. Whom should he find his parents talking to but Professor Habbleman!

‘Ah, my young friend!’ said Habbleman, very surprised to see him.

‘Er... how do you do,’ said Cedric, his brain racing.

‘This is Professor Habbleman, darling,’ said Lady Collingford.

‘My son Cedric,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘After the lecture, I fly to Heidelberg,’ said Habbleman to Cedric, who had just noticed the little basket on his chair.

‘The Professor’s discovered a very rare toad, Cedric. Isn’t it... er... exciting?’ said Lady Collingford, but before Habbleman could say anything about Cedric’s visit, Lord Collingford suggested that if he was going to catch the plane, the lecture should begin in a few minutes.

‘Perhaps you would show the Society into the lecture room, Cedric,’ suggested his father.

Cedric nodded, anxious to escape, but as he went towards the main hall, Catweazle came scurrying down the passage towards him, holding Adamcos before him like a torch.

‘What are you playing at?’ gasped Cedric.

‘Touchwood is here — I feel it!’ said Catweazle fiercely.

‘That’s fantastic!’ said Cedric. ‘You’re right. Habbleman’s the lecturer here this afternoon.’

Cedric bundled him into the darkened lecture room and behind the curtains. But in his haste to get him out of the window, he knocked over Professor Habbleman’s slides. While he finished picking them up the members of the Society began to drift into the room. Catweazle tried vainly to open the shutters.

He watched through the curtains as Professor Habble-man came in with Lord and Lady Collingford, and was introduced to Groome, who had been pressed into service to operate the projector.

‘You are familiar with this machine?’ asked Habbleman.

‘I know how to work it, if that’s what you mean,’ said Groome, beginning to bridle.

‘Start here,’ said Habbleman, pointing at the slides, ‘they are all in order.’ Cedric shuddered at that and crossed his fingers. ‘When I tap,’ Habbleman gave the table a little tap, ‘then change the slide.’

‘Slides in order. One tap, change!’ said Groome, to show Habbleman he’d got it.

Habbleman nodded. He put Touchwood’s little basket down on the screen table where it was only just out of Catweazle’s reach and waited while the President of the Society introduced him.

‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ he began, ‘the title of my lecture is, Toads of Great Britain, but before I start, I want you to know that today has been a red letter day for me. In this little basket,’ he held it up, ‘is the most remarkable discovery since Darwin. However, first things first.’ He paused and nodded to Cedric, who was waiting by the door to switch out the lights. Groome turned on the projector and a large picture of a toad appeared but Catweazle did not see it as his window faced the edge of the screen.

‘The common toad emerges from hibernation at the end of March and migrates to the water,’ said Habbleman. ‘Its colour matches the soil on which it lives. The female is somewhat larger than the male.’ He gave a little tap, and an elephant appeared on the screen upside down.

‘No. No!’ said Habbleman.

‘No,’ said Groome testily. ‘I know.’ ‘Take it out!’ said Habbleman.

The screen went blank.

‘As I have said,’ he went on, ‘the female is somewhat larger than the male,’ and he gave another little tap.

The next slide appeared to be from Professor Habbleman’s holiday album and showed him standing in the sea with Mrs Habbleman, who was very definitely somewhat larger than the male.

‘Are you mad?’ shouted Habbleman at Groome. ‘Are you completely mad?’

‘You said these slides were in order,’ retorted Groome, very aggrieved.

Habbleman went storming up to him and everybody turned from the screen to watch the argument. This gave Catweazle his chance and he crawled out from behind the curtain and took Touchwood from the box.

‘I always check. Why don’t you concentrate?’ said Habbleman angrily.

‘In order,’ repeated Groome stolidly. ‘That’s what you said.’

Habbleman turned on his heel and marched back to the brightly lit

screen. Catweazle crept under the table.

'Next slide please,' said Habbleman loudly.

Another toad appeared on the screen.

'Good!' said Habbleman. 'Here we see Bufo calamita. The Natterjack or Running Toad.'

Catweazle decided to try escaping through another window so, using the darkness and the fact that everyone seemed to be looking in the direction of the beam of light from the projector, he crawled over to the wall. Then he remembered he had forgotten Touchwood's boot and he turned back to get it.

'The Natterjack,' said Habbleman, unaware that a magician was creeping about in the dark on his hands and knees, 'is much greener than the Common Toad.' He tapped the table and a bright red lobster appeared on the screen. Catweazle, gasped when he saw it. It was Scorpio!

'What are you doing?' screamed Habbleman at Groome. 'That's a lobster!'

'I'm doing my best, that's what I'm doing!' shouted Groome.

Catweazle started back towards the screen while once more a furious row developed. He reached up out of the darkness and tried to grab the lobster. Several people saw his skinny hand appear in the beam and an old lady in the front row started screaming.

Cedric bent down and pulled the flex from the power point. The projector's beam went out and the room was plunged into darkness. Everyone began getting to their feet, scraping their chairs on the wooden floor.

'Keep calm!' commanded Lord Collingford.

'Lights! Lights!' shouted Habbleman, but instead, Cedric opened the door hoping that Catweazle might get out that way,

Catweazle was still trying to get the Sign of the Scorpion and there was a crash as the screen collapsed into its long black box.

Groome blundered over to the door, pushed Cedric to one side and switched on the lights.

'The screen!' cried Habbleman. 'Someone's taken the screen!'

Cedric could see the curtains by the table were moving slightly. It was only a matter of seconds before Catweazle was caught.

'The toad! My toad!' yelled Habbleman, finding the little basket was empty.

'Look! Out in the hall!' called Cedric, pointing at an imaginary thief. Everybody stumbled out of the room.

As soon as they'd gone Cedric ran to drag Catweazle from the curtains.

'I have it!' said the excited magician. 'I have the Sign of the Scorpion!' He put the screen on the table and pulled it up from the

box. ‘It hath vanished!’ he gasped.

‘It’s a slide — you idiot!’ said Cedric, glancing anxiously towards the door.

‘Slide? muttered Catweazle.

Cedric took the little colour transparency from the projector and held it up to the light.

‘ ’Tis tiny,’ whispered Catweazle, peering at it. Clearly the wizard had the power to make things grow large or small at will.

‘Time you got out of here,’ said Cedric, and opened the curtains and shutters while Catweazle surreptitiously put the slide into his pocket. They drew the curtains behind them, and climbed outside.

‘The boot,’ said Catweazle, ‘I have forgot the boot!’

‘There’s no time! You’ve got Touchwood, that’s the main thing. Now get going!’

‘Nay,’ said Catweazle, turning back to the window.

‘Well I’m off,’ said Cedric, and fled.

Habbleman had already found Touchwood’s boot and was crouched over it when Lord and Lady Collingford came back into the lecture room.

‘Are you there?’ said Habbleman hopefully into the boot.

‘Are you feeling all right, Professor?’ said Lord Collingford.

Habbleman left the boot by the window and came slowly over to them. ‘Things will never be the same again,’ he said brokenly.

‘Of course they will,’ said Lady Collingford, ‘there’ll be other toads.’

Catweazle reached in and silently picked up the boot.

‘No,’ groaned Habbleman, ‘it was the find of a life time.’

They looked towards the window but the boot had vanished. ‘Groome’s right,’ said Lord Collingford, ‘something very peculiar is going on round here.’

SAGITTARIUS

NEARLY every afternoon Cedric would walk through the woods to give Catweazle a reading lesson. In return the magician would try to teach Cedric the mysteries of the old magic. It was hard work for both of them and they often lost their tempers. But eventually, because they were anxious to learn one another's secrets, they began to make some progress.

Cedric stood in front of a little blackboard and pointed at the letters with Catweazle's magic wand while Catweazle sat on an orange box in front of him. The Sacred Fire was alight in the red fire-bucket and Touchwood, whose illness had turned out to be nothing more than a sloughing of his old skin, sat fatly in the entrance to his boot. Round the Zodiac were the various magical signs Catweazle had so far managed to collect. The ram's horns, the inn sign, the two plastic dolls, the silver-gilt inkwell, the gramophone record, the visiting card, the scales from tbe statue of Justice and the colour slide of the lobster.

'A for Adamcos,' said Cedric.

'A for Adamcos,' repeated Catweazle.

'B for bananas.'

'Nay,' said Catweazle, 'bee is for honey.'

Cedric sighed, 'I don't think you've quite got the idea yet. C .. . Now you can do this one.'

'Catweazle!' said the magician proudly.

'Good!' said Cedric. 'D?'

Catweazle crossed his fingers. 'Demons!'

'E!' 'Electrickery!'

'Z?' said Cedric finally. Catweazle pointed to the magic ring he had drawn so carefully. 'The Zodiac,' he whispered.

'Congratulations!' said Cedric. 'You got right through the alphabet that time. Now we can get down to business.' He rummaged in his duffle bag and gave the magician a book. ' "I am a Little Dog",' he said.

'Art thou, Owlface?'

Cedric sighed. 'It's the title of the book. See?... I... am... a... Little... Dog.'

'I shall never read it.'

'Of course you will. You're just a late starter!'

But Catweazle shook his head. 'Nay,' he said, 'I must find the signs of the Zodiac, that I may fly.'

'But suppose the rhyme means something else? Suppose it's not a flying spell after all?'

Catweazle wasn't listening. He picked up the ancient book of magic.

‘The Sign of the Centaur. Half man, half horse. Where shall I find it?’

‘How should I know?’ said Cedric angrily. ‘I’m getting fed up with it all. It’s such a waste of time.’

‘A waste of Time?’ snorted Catweazle. ‘Flying by magic, a waste of Time?’ He hunched himself up and buried his head in the book. ‘Away thou whining gnat, and trouble me not!’

Cedric stood up. He was furious. ‘I like that!’ he said. ‘Trouble you not! What about all the trouble I’ve gone to for you? The jams I’ve got you out of. Difficulties, I mean. You get everything handed to you on a plate and a fat lot of thanks I ever get.’

‘Fat thanks on a plate?’ said the bewildered Catweazle.

‘You know what I mean,’ Cedric went on, ‘you never do anything for me. What about the treasure?’

He couldn’t help feeling rather bitter that Catweazle had never offered to help him find the lost treasure of the Collingfords, though he tantalized him by mentioning the many magical rituals for uncovering treasure.

‘Away, thou itching earwig,’ muttered Catweazle, still turning the pages of his book, ‘leave me to my magic.’

‘Oh, don’t worry,’ Cedric snatched up his duffle bag, ‘I’m going. You couldn’t find it anyway. Even if there is a spell, you’d never be able to make it work.’

Catweazle quivered with rage, but pretended to go on reading.

‘Don’t expect any more help from me. I’m going home to get on with my opera. I’ve wasted enough of the holidays as it is!’ And Cedric banged out of Duck Halt.

There was a long pause. Catweazle’s rage boiled inside him like a cauldron and finally, with a great cry of anger, he rose to his feet and slammed his book shut. ‘Four-eyed ferret!’ he cried.

It was dangerous to insult a magician and mock his powers and at first Catweazle thought only of revenge. He planned various ways to bewitch Owlface, but then he realized that it would be more satisfying to prove how potent his powers could be.

Catweazle opened the book again and found the spell for seeking hidden gold. ‘Search not by day,’ he read, ‘for gold is the metal of the sun. Therefore, make thou thy magic at midnight.’

He looked at Touchwood. ‘Tonight, my minion,’ he said, ‘we will go thither and Owlface shall eat his words.’

When Cedric returned home he found his parents in the hall with a tall skinny man who was banging a tuning fork against the refectory table and listening hard to the faint humming sound it made.

‘Yes,’ said the stranger. ‘Definite vibrations.’

‘I told you so,’ said Lady Collingford to her husband.

‘Any idea who it might be?’ the man asked.

‘Yes I have,’ said Lady Collingford firmly. ‘I think it’s Lord Alfred.’ She pointed to his portrait on the wall.

‘That’s ridiculous,’ said Lord Collingford irritably. ‘Why on earth would he want to haunt us?’

‘Because of the treasure,’ said Lady Collingford.

‘Ah! Treasure!’ said the stranger.

‘He was supposed to have hidden it somewhere in the house before he... er... took off from Beachy Head,’ said Lady Collingford. ‘Maybe that’s why he’s come back. To tell us where he put it.’

Lord Collingford made an exasperated sort of noise and the thin man said coldly, ‘I gather you don’t believe in ghosts, Lord Collingford.’

‘You gather correctly, Mr Kenley,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘Lord Alfred isn’t haunting us, is he?’ whispered Cedric to his mother.

‘That’s what Mr Kenley is here to investigate,’ said Lady Collingford, looking slightly embarrassed.

It was really Catweazle’s fault. The affair of the disappearing boot had finally convinced Lady Collingford that the house was haunted, so she had asked Hector Kenley, the well-known ghost hunter, to Kings Farthing, hoping he would be able to persuade the ghost to reveal the treasure or go elsewhere, little knowing that Kenley and his assistant Hackforth were complete frauds.

Lord Collingford wasn’t so easily deceived. At midnight Kenley and Hackforth were busy on the landing, setting up their pretended ghost-hunting experiments, when he appeared in his dressing-gown to check up on them.

‘Isn’t someone going to trip over that?’ he said, pointing at a wire stretched across the landing.

‘Not if they’re a ghost,’ said Kenley, pretending to write something in his note-book.

Lord Collingford thought about this for a moment. ‘Then why put it there?’ he asked.

Kenley stopped writing, momentarily caught out. ‘Er... just leave this to us, Lord Collingford,’ he said airily, ‘we do know what we are doing, you know.’

Hackforth came hurrying up with a large tin of talcum powder, and went crashing over the wire. Lord Collingford gave them an icy look and bade them both a rather curt good night.

‘Sorry, Hector,’ said Hackforth, struggling to his feet.

‘Where have you been?’

‘Sprinkling the door-knobs with talcum powder.’

‘You’ve been hours.’

‘There’s a hundred and eighty door-knobs,’ said Hackforth glumly. He put down the talcum powder. ‘Anyway, Hector, why do I have to

do it?'

'I've no idea,' said Kenley, 'but it looks impressive.'

'Think we'll be here long?'

Kenley shrugged. 'Might keep it going until we get to Smallwood Towers, and that should take us up to Christmas.'

They hid several small loudspeakers and connected them to a tape recorder in their bedroom. 'We'll wait for an hour,' said Kenley, 'then we'll give them a few moans. That ought to do the trick.'

Downstairs, Catweazle had climbed into Kings Farthing on his private treasure hunt. He had brought his magic book, an old bell and some candles he had blackened with boot polish. He crept into Cedric's bedroom and managed to open the secret panel. Cedric woke as he disappeared and then followed him down to the magic chamber. He found him standing amid the flickering candles.

'Just what d'you think you're up to?' said Cedric. 'Begone! I need thee not!' said Catweazle angrily. 'I shall find thy treasure!'

'Don't be ridiculous,' said Cedric, blowing out the candles and stuffing them back into Catweazle's pockets. 'You can't keep coming here. Anyway, they're looking for ghosts tonight.'

Catweazle looked at him sharply. 'Ghosts?' he said.

'I thought that would make you think.'

'Ghosts!' repeated Catweazle, his eyes shining with excitement. 'Then they will lead us to the gold.'

'What!' said Cedric.

'Dost thou know nothing?' said Catweazle. 'Ghosts know where gold is hid!' He drew Adamcos and ran off up the steps with Cedric tearing after him just as Kenley and Hackforth switched on the tape recorder and a series of moans echoed eerily along the dark passages. Catweazle was delighted. 'Ah ha ha ha ha!' he cried. Kenley and Hackforth looked at each other. 'Was that you, Hackforth?' said Kenley.

'No, Hector,' said Hackforth. Catweazle was about to open their bedroom door when Cedric finally caught up with him.

'No!' he hissed. 'They're in there!'

' 'Tis so and I will speak with them,' said Catweazle. 'Salmay! Dalmay! Adonay!'

Hackforth and Kenley listened with horror. 'What was that?' said Kenley, licking his lips.

'Sounded like... "Sunday. All day. Agony." ' whispered Hackforth in terror.

'Come on!' said Kenley and flung open the door just as Cedric dragged Catweazle out of sight. They watched the two ghost-hunters run down the corridor and go crashing over the trip-wire. The noise woke Lord and Lady Collingford.

‘What was that?’ whispered Lady Collingford.

‘Probably Kenley or that other lunatic,’ grunted Lord Collingford.

‘But he might have hurt himself.’

‘I hope he’s broken his neck!’

‘Please, Charles!’

‘Oh, all right,’ said Lord Collingford, and climbed reluctantly out of bed.

Cedric pushed Catweazle behind a chair just before his father arrived. Kenley and Hackforth had already limped back to their room.

‘Why aren’t you in bed?’ said Lord Collingford.

‘I couldn’t get to sleep,’ said Cedric.

‘That’s no reason for keeping everybody else awake,’ said Lord Collingford. ‘Go back to bed and stay there.’

But Cedric had first to deal with Catweazle, who had vanished from his hiding place.

‘Who was it?’ said Lady Collingford, as her husband climbed back into bed.

‘Cedric,’ said Lord Collingford, turning off the light, ‘said he couldn’t sleep.’

‘Oh,’ said Lady Collingford, who couldn’t sleep either.

A few minutes later, she heard a strange fizzing noise. It was Catweazle, still looking for the ghosts. Lady Collingford switched the light on again and nudged her sleeping husband. ‘Charles!’ she whispered.

Lord Collingford woke with a start. ‘Now what?’ he said grumpily.

‘Listen!’

There was absolute silence.

‘I can’t hear anything,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘It’s stopped now.’

‘Please Dottie,’ said Lord Collingford, ‘it’s after two!’

Kenley and Hackforth were still recovering from their

fright when Catweazle arrived outside their door again, fizzing in excitement, with Cedric hot on his trail. ‘D’you know what I think,’ said Kenley, ‘it’s that boy, Cedric. He’s making fools of us. Pretending to be a ghost.’ He pulled the sheets off his bed and handed one to Hackforth. ‘Well, two can play at that game! We’ll give him the shock of his life!’

They draped themselves in the sheets, switched off the lights and threw open the door.

They were face to face with Catweazle. ‘I bid thee welcome,’ he said, in a solemn voice.

The ghosts were terrified. ‘Sssspeak to it, H-H-Hector,’ stammered Hackforth, shaking under his sheet.

‘Where is the gold?’ asked Catweazle.

‘Lady Collingford was right!’ Hackforth whispered. ‘It’s Lord Alfred! He thinks we’ve found the treasure!’ ‘D-D-Depart in peace,’ said Kenley.

‘Nay,’ said Catweazle, coming into the bedroom, ‘lead me to the treasure.’

The ghosts ran out in a panic and crashed over the trip-wire again. Cedric hid in the shadows and by the time the ghost hunters had picked themselves up Lord Collingford was coming angrily down the passage.

‘I’m not standing for any more of this,’ he told them. ‘Will you please pack your things and leave at once.’

But they were too terrified to return to their bedroom, and while they argued Cedric slipped past them unobserved and hid Catweazle in the bathroom. Then he went back into the ghost hunters’ bedroom, because the tape-recorder had made him suspicious. He switched it on and eerie moans came from the hidden loudspeakers

‘They’re frauds!’ shouted Cedric.

‘Just as I thought!’ said Lord Collingford, coming in after him, as Lady Collingford, alarmed by the moans, appeared in the doorway. ‘Here’s your ghost, Dottie,’ said Lord Collingford, pointing to the tape recorder.

‘Oh Charles!’ she said. ‘I’ll never believe in ghosts again.’

Inside the bathroom, Catweazle was on his hands and knees gazing at the mat. On it was a silhouette of Sagittarius. It was the ninth sign of the Zodiac!

Kenley and Hackforth were packing, watched by Lord Collingford, and Cedric was getting back into bed, when he suddenly remembered he had left Catweazle in the bathroom. He tiptoed swiftly down the passage just in time to see his mother going inside. He waited for the screams, but none came. Catweazle had retreated into the shower. He had taken the bath mat with him andwas watching Lady Collingford through the shower curtain when the rope round his robe became hooked on the lever. He twisted round and accidentally turned on the shower, knocking the contents of a detergent packet on the floor.

'Goodness, Charles!' said Lady Collingford, who had her back to him. 'You made me jump! What an odd time to have a shower.'

Catweazle was getting very wet.

'Are you still angry with me?' asked Lady Collingford.

The water poured down remorselessly and a dense cloud of bubbles began to form round Catweazle's feet.

'I admit I've been very silly,' Lady Collingford went on, 'but I really did think I was beginning to see things.'

Catweazle was now thoroughly drenched and the magic rain was getting quite hot, while the strange cloud rose higher and higher, bubbling and foaming around him.

'I wouldn't have it too hot if I were you,' warned Lady Collingford, as the bathroom began to fill with steam. By now, the white cloud was

in danger of engulfing Catweazle and he moaned dismally.

Lady Collingford's blood ran cold as she finally realized it was not Lord Collingford. Slowly she forced herself to turn towards the curtain. Behind it a weird white form waved its arms at her. She gave a piercing shriek and fainted.

Catweazle skidded out dripping wet, covered in foam, and carrying the bath mat.

Cedric pushed him hurriedly down the back stairs and out of the house.

The night's adventures only served to strengthen Lady Collingford's belief in ghosts and Catweazle's belief in the magic Signs. As for Cedric, he became even more determined that one day he would find the lost treasure.

‘Satanaciodiabolus!’ yelled Catweazle furiously, hurling his magic book across Duck Halt.

‘Curses blight thee, O Zodiac!
Lightning blast thee!
Fire burn thee up!’

he cried.

‘Steady on!’ said Cedric as Catweazle raced to the table, and swept everything to the floor. ‘I cannot find it!’ he said, hurling a bottle against the wall,’ I cannot find it!’

‘Calm down, Catweazle!’ said Cedric.

Catweazle turned on him, letting out his breath in a great fizz of anger. ‘Why can I not find it? I have conjured Spirits, raised Demons!’ He smashed a jam-jar. ‘Nothing works! Nothing works!’ He kicked the old cigarette machine and then howled with pain and clutched his foot.

‘Don’t be childish!’ said Cedric, polishing his glasses.

‘Cross me not! Cross me not!’

‘Behave yourself, Catweazle!’

‘Stink weed!’

The magician crouched down and sulked, hunched and prickly as a hedgehog.

‘It’s not my fault you can’t find Capricorn,’ said Cedric gently.

‘The sign of the Goat,’ snapped Catweazle.

‘All right then. The sign of the goat,’ said Cedric, kneeling beside him. ‘It’s silly to give up now. And it’s no good losing your temper, is it?’

Catweazle was full of self-pity. ‘I shall never fly. I shall never find the thirteen Signs. ’Tis all folly,’ he moaned.

‘You’re doing terribly well,’ said Cedric, but Catweazle merely stared into space. ‘O that I had the Divine Egg,’ he whispered.

‘What on earth’s that?’ asked Cedric.

Catweazle looked at him. Surely Owlface was mocking him again? ‘The Philosopher’s Stone. The source of all magic power,’ he

explained. ‘With it I could fly, make gold, find thy treasure: understand all things.’

‘Sounds quite useful,’ murmured Cedric.

‘We of the Old Ways have sought it since Time was a baby.’

‘Any luck?’

Catweazle shook his head and a caterpillar fell out of his beard. ‘Trees will walk when it is found,’ he said sadly.

‘Then I’d look for the other signs if I were you.’

‘Thou art right, Owlface,’ sighed Catweazle.

There was a pause.

‘Feeling better?’

Catweazle nodded.

‘Good! I really came to warn you not to go charging around the woods today. It’s a bit complicated to explain. There’s a military exercise going on, so keep out of sight.’

Lord Collingford was in the Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve, and he had given permission for an exercise to be held on his estate. The sitting-room at Kings Farthing had been turned into a temporary headquarters and field-telephone wires trailed everywhere. Lord Collingford, in a very smart uniform, was busily sticking little flags into a large map, when Lieutenant Colonel Dickinson, a tough leathery-faced man with white hair, marched into the room.

Groome, who had been testing the telephones, immediately stood to attention.

‘Morning, Arnold,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘Hello, Charles,’ said Dickinson. ‘Everything ready?’

‘I think so. Come and look at the map.’

Colonel Dickinson was the commander of the Green Devils, who had green goats on their armbands, while Lord Collingford was in charge of the enemy force, the Blue Demons, who had blue wolves. Each move in the mock battle would be reported by phone and its progress plotted on the map by the two commanders, rather like a game of chess.

A phone rang, but as there were eight of them on the desk, Lord Collingford had some difficulty in locating it.

‘Blue Demon One,’ he said crisply.

‘Standing by, sir,’ said a voice at the other end of the line.

‘Good!’ said Lord Collingford and hung up. ‘The umpires are ready, Arnold,’ he said.

‘Right,’ said Dickinson, ‘I’ll just pop down to see Jones. Better synchronize watches.’

They all looked at their watches.

‘Dash it!’ said Dickinson, ‘darn thing’s stopped.’ He turned to Groome. ‘Are you a Green Devil or a Blue Demon?’

‘Green Devil, sir,’ said Groome.

‘Good man!’ said Colonel Dickinson. ‘Come on!’

The stables had been turned into a command post for the Green Devil army and the office was being manned by Lieutenant Jones, a brash, bossy, fair-haired young man. He was on the phone when Colonel Dickinson came in.

‘Now then, Jones,’ said Dickinson, ‘for the purposes of

Exercise Capricorn, I’m promoting you to Major. Got to encourage you part-time chappies.’

‘Thank you, sir,’ said Jones, overwhelmed by his sudden rise to power.

‘Better synchronize watches,’ said Dickinson.

They looked at them.

‘Darn thing’s stopped again,’ snorted Dickinson.

Catweazle had taken no notice of Cedric's warning and was picking blackberries in the woods when suddenly he saw a tree walking across the clearing ahead of him. Then three similar trees came up and they all moved off together.

‘Trees will walk!’ said Catweazle when he had recovered from the shock. ‘Trees will walk!’ He began to fizz with excitement. ‘The Philosopher’s Stone! ’Tis found!’

He turned to the tree he was crouching behind. ‘Come, O tree,’ he said, ‘let us follow thy brothers.’

The tree refused to budge.

‘Art tired? Hast thou come far? Rest here, O tree, and I will follow them,’ said Catweazle.

By now Exercise Capricorn was well under way and at headquarters the two commanders were beginning to get reports from their various units.

‘We’ve just wiped out Blue Demon C Platoon,’ said Dickinson, pulling some of Lord Collingford’s flags from the map.

‘Ah yes,’ said Lord Collingford from the other side of the table. ‘But we’ve just captured the sewage farm.’ Outside Green Devil Command Post Major Jones was briefing a platoon. ‘Keep your eyes peeled for any suspicious-looking civilians in the area. They could be Blue Demons, I’m issuing you with two grenades each,’ he went on and started opening a large wooden box on the bench in front of him. ‘Wait a minute, wait a minute,’ he said, ‘who signed for these?’

A soldier in the front rank stood to attention.

‘You were told to get dummy grenades. This stuff’s live,’ said Jones angrily. ‘It’s a good thing I noticed. Somebody could have got hurt.’

The grenades were taken into the office and then the platoon marched off into the woods.

Just then the trees walked up to the Command Post. Four soldiers climbed out of them and went inside to report to Major Jones.

Catweazle crept up a few minutes later, and approached the trees cautiously with his fingers crossed, wondering if Owlface knew the Philosopher’s Stone had at last been found.

‘Where is thy master?’ he whispered to them but there was no answer. They were just fibre-glass, after all.

‘Speak! I charge thee!’ said Catweazle angrily.

At that moment, Major Jones came out with the four soldiers and grabbed Catweazle as a Blue Demon spy. Then he telephoned his commanding officer to tell him of the capture.

‘Excellent, Jones,’ said Colonel Dickinson. ‘Report again when you’ve questioned him.’

Jones hung up and looked sternly towards Catweazle.

‘Right. Now then, are you a Blue Demon?’

Catweazle was terrified. ‘Nay, O great one,’ he whispered.

Jones looked rather surprised at this. No one had ever called him Great One before.

‘Well are you a Green Devil, then?’

Catweazle looked round fearfully and crossed his fingers.

'One of us,' said Jones leaning over the desk.

' 'Tis so,' said Catweazle, who thought Jones was a magician like himself.

'Right,' said Jones, 'then give the password.'

Catweazle looked blank.

'The word, man! The word!' said Jones. 'Schempamporasch!' said Catweazle.

'Wrong!' said Jones. 'It's Lucifer.'

Catweazle crossed his fingers.

'So that makes you a Blue Demon, doesn't it?' said Jones smugly. He picked up a pencil. 'Your name?' 'Catweazle.'

'Your real name, you idiot!'

'Hast thou great powers?'

'I'm in charge of this Command Post, if that's what you mean. Now, for the last time, what's your name?'

'I am thy brother,' said Catweazle calmly, and crooked his forefingers each side of his head to make imaginary horns. Jones looked at him in astonishment.

'I know you're supposed to be difficult,' he said, 'but you've got to play fair. Now then. Number.'

'Nine,' said Catweazle.

'Nine what?' said Jones.

' 'Tis the magic number,' said Catweazle.

Jones put his head in his hands. 'All right, all right,' he said, 'what's your rank?'

'What dost thou mean?'

Jones was getting rattled. 'You go on like this and I'll call an umpire.'

'A demon?'

'No, an umpire. You're a Demon.'

'Nay,'

Jones controlled himself with difficulty. 'Are you an officer?'

'Canst thou fly?' asked Catweazle suddenly.

Jones pounded the table with his fist. 'We're in the army, not the blessed air force!' He wrote furiously on the pad in front of him. 'Number... 9, something. Rank... refused to answer. Now then,' he looked up at Catweazle. 'Name?'

'Catweazle,' said the magician with dignity.

Jones reached for the phone and rang his headquarters.

'What's that?' said Dickinson. 'Cat. Weasel?' Cedric, who was bringing the two commanders their tea, nearly dropped the tray.

'But that's code, Jones,' Dickinson went on.

'Yes sir,' said Jones, 'but it doesn't make sense.'

Catweazle took a banana from his pocket and offered it to Jones.

'I don't eat bananas,' said Jones, forgetting he was still on the phone.

* "I don't eat bananas," ' repeated Dickinson at headquarters, while Cedric hovered near, trying hard to hear. 'I'll look that up in the code-book.'

'No, sir,' said Jones, 'I was talking to *him.* D'you think it's a deliberate attempt to confuse us?'

'More than likely, Jones,' said Dickinson, 'Keep at him,' and he hung up. 'Cat and Weasel' he repeated, and both Commanders searched through their code-books. 'Cat means advance!' said Lord Collingford.

'And Weasel means retreat!' said Dickinson, and they looked at each other in bewilderment, not noticing Cedric had gone.

Jones continued to interrogate his prisoner. 'Look,' he pleaded, 'it's only an exercise. You're not really a spy. Nobody's going to shoot you. But I've got to put something on the report sheet.'

'Thou has all the Signs,' said Catweazle, knowingly. 'What of?' said Jones, immediately on the defensive. 'I'm perfectly all right. You'll never wear me down.'

'Why art thou angry?'

Jones clutched his head. 'Who are you?' he shouted. 'Catweazle,' repeated Catweazle calmly.

Jones leapt to his feet, beside himself with anger. 'Stand up!' he yelled. 'Turn out your pockets!'

Catweazle stood up, rather worried, and did as he was told. He took out a lump of chalk, a stone with a hole in it, a half-eaten tube of tooth-paste, a mandrake root, a rusty mouth organ and some curtain-rings. 'No map?' asked Jones faintly, beginning to think that he had made a terrible mistake. 'No compass?'

' 'Tis all, save Touchwood,' said Catweazle, taking the toad from his special pocket, 'Thou wilt not harm him?'

Jones stared stupidly at the toad.

' 'Tis my familiar,' said Catweazle, 'where is thine?'

Jones reached for the phone again. 'This is Major Jones, sir,' he said and then turned away from Catweazle and lowered his voice. 'I think we've made a bit of an error, sir, with regard to this... er .. . spy.'

'What do you mean, Jones?' replied Dickinson.

'Well, sir,' said Jones, turning himself even further from Catweazle and whispering into the phone. 'I'm beginning to think we've picked up a real civilian by mistake.'

Then Catweazle saw the grenade-box against thé wall and he reached out and opened it. His eyes widened. The box contained the Divine Egg! The strange sorcerer who was muttering into the telling-bone had found lots of them. Catweazle took one out of the box and

held it reverently.

'He could turn nasty about it, sir,' continued Jones, still with his back to Catweazle.

'Don't be ridiculous,' replied Dickinson irritably, 'of course he's a Blue Demon.'

'But he's got a toad in his pocket, sir, and some curtain rings.'

At Headquarters, Dickinson turned to Lord Collingford and put his hand over the mouthpiece. 'Jones has cracked up, I'm afraid,' he said. 'Battle fatigue.'

He spoke into the phone again. 'All right, Jones, I'm coming over.'

As Jones replaced his receiver he saw the grenade in Catweazle's hand.

'The Divine Egg!' said Catweazle, throwing it up in the air and catching it.

Jones put his fingers in his ears and drew back in his chair.

'I knew thou hadst it,' said Catweazle, waving it at him.

'Put it down! Put it down!' gabbled Jones, turning faintly green.

'But thou hast many!'

Jones could hardly speak. 'Just put it down, will you?' he said faintly.

Catweazle stood up and held it over his head. 'Now shall I fly!' he said loudly.

Jones took cover under the table and Catweazle peered at him in surprise. 'Why dost thou hide?'

Jones backed on his hands and knees. 'Go away! Go away!' he said hoarsely.

'Ah!' said Catweazle, 'then I may keep thy mighty Stone of Power?'

'Look, mate,' said Jones, trembling all over, 'if you want to blow yourself up — do it outside, will you?' Catweazle was delighted. Blow himself up! Into the skies! It was his dearest wish.

'Jones! Jones!' called Lieutenant Colonel Dickinson as he approached the door. Catweazle hid quickly behind it and when Dickinson opened it all he could see was Major Jones, crouched under the table with his fingers in his ears.

'Don't worry, Jones,' said Dickinson gently. 'It's all over as far as you are concerned.'

'S... S... Sir... sir... sir,' stammered Jones.

'I know, lad. It's been too much for you, but it's nothing to be ashamed of.' Dickinson closed the door and then jumped away when he saw Catweazle standing behind him with the grenade.

'It's live, sir,' said Jones, 'and he's as mad as a hatter.' Dickinson backed round the table. 'Give me that grenade,' he said.

' 'Tis mine,' said Catweazle, clutching it to him, 'there is one for thee in the box.'

‘Come on, there’s a good chap,’ said Dickinson, holding out his hand.

‘I shall fly,’ said Catweazle, thinking of the power the Philosopher’s Stone would give him. ‘I shall become invisible.’

‘We all will if he pulls out the pin,’ muttered Jones under the table.

‘Shut up, Jones!’ said Dickinson, who didn’t want the ragged maniac to get any ideas.

‘ ’Tis the Divine Egg. Farewell,’ said Catweazle, raising it aloft, and Dickinson joined Jones under the table.

When Catweazle ran outside, waving the grenade, a returning party of Green Demons scattered instinctively.

‘Truly I have the Power,’ he thought and capered off into the woods with the precious egg.

From that moment Exercise Capricorn turned into a manhunt. Both sides joined forces to track down the lunatic with the hand grenade, before he blew himself to pieces.

Cedric, who had got there just as Catweazle disappeared, tagged on to a party of soldiers led by Colonel Dickinson and it was this party that eventually found the magician. He was sitting on the low branch of a tree, still examining the grenade.

‘I’ll do this,’ whispered Dickinson. ‘The rest of you stay here.’

‘But sir ..protested Jones.

‘That’s an order, Lieutenant Jones,’ said Dickinson, demoting him suddenly, ‘My last, probably.’

He tucked his shooting-stick under one arm and walked calmly towards Catweazle. The magician watched him rather warily.

‘Er... don’t do anything silly, will you?’ said Dickinson, keeping his eyes firmly fixed on the grenade. ‘Not without telling me first.’

‘Who art thou?’ said Catweazle, suspiciously.

‘Lieutenant Colonel Dickinson.’

‘Where is the magician?’

‘No idea,’ said Dickinson, completely at a loss. ‘Now do be sensible, old chap.’ He held out his arm for the grenade and Catweazle saw the Green Devil armband.

‘The Sign of the Goat!’ he said, pointing to it eagerly.

‘Oh, do you want it?’ said Dickinson, seizing the chance of an exchange.

‘Ay,’ said Catweazle.

Dickinson took off his armband and put it on the end of the shooting stick. He offered it up to Catweazle who pocketed it, fizzing with pleasure.

‘Now can we have our bomb back?’ said Dickinson.

But Catweazle had no intention of parting with the Divine Egg and continued to fondle it. Suddenly the pin came out. He was so

surprised, that he let the grenade slip through his fingers and it landed at Dickinson's feet. Without a second's hesitation the Colonel took a tremendous swing with his shooting-stick and hit the grenade into the bushes some distance away. There was a loud explosion and Catweazle fell backwards out of the tree. He fled away through the woods as if every demon in the world of magic were after him. But although the Divine Egg had disappeared in a clap of thunder, he still had the Sign of the Goat.

Catweazle had a bad cold, which had forced him to give up his search for Aquarius, the Water Bearer. Cedric went to see him every day and did his best to cheer him up but, eventually, his chattering irritated Catweazle so much that he dragged himself out of bed, still wrapped in an old horse-blanket, and began to make a magic potion.

By now Cedric was able to read bits of the ancient spell-book and knew a little about magical practices. He helped Catweazle prepare the cauldron — an old bucket from the rubbish dump — and recited the right spells for each ingredient as they went into the bubbling mixture. Occasionally Catweazle would correct him irritably when he mispronounced a Word of Power, but secretly the magician was pleased that Owlface was learning so quickly.

> ‘Toad-flax, garlic, rue and yarrow,
> Warm me to the very marrow,’

read Cedric, throwing the herbs into the cauldron as he walked slowly round it, deosil.

‘Good!’ said Catweazle, looking at the evil liquid.

‘You’re not really going to drink it, are you?’ said Cedric anxiously.

‘What follows?’ said Catweazle, shivering feverishly.

> ‘Cobweb, soot and three small stones,
> Take this ague from my bones,’

Cedric went on.

‘Gab gaba agaba,’ muttered Catweazle.

‘Look, I’ll get you some proper medicine if you like.’ Catweazle took no notice and began to stir the cauldron with the pump from his tricycle, but he was so weak that he dropped it on the floor.

‘I’ll do it,’ said Cedric, picking it up.

‘Nay, I must stir,’ said Catweazle.

. ‘For how long?’

‘Nine thousand times.’

‘You’ll never do it.’

‘I must. Or ’twill not be fit to drink.’

‘But that means stirring all day, and you ought to be in bed.’

‘Ay,’ said Catweazle miserably.

‘There’s something up at the house will do it for you,’ said Cedric, remembering Mrs Gowdie’s electric hand-mixer. 'It’s a sort of magic stirrer.’

Catweazle, who was really too weak to argue, agreed to try it but flatly refused to let Cedric take the potion to Kings Farthing by himself, though a large marquee was being erected in front of the house for the Elderford Flower and Vegetable Show, and soon the place would be swarming with visitors. Cedric hid Catweazle near the rockery where they had found the wogle-stone and took the potion bucket into the kitchen.

Groome was at the sink with a similar bucket, mixing fertilizer to put on his marrow. The marrow competition was an annual battle between Groome and Lord Collingford, and for weeks before the great day the two men tended their marrows with jealous care. Nobody else had ever won the competition and Lady Collingford had once said that the only reason for the Elderford Show was to continue the horticultural battle between Groome and her husband.

Cedric picked up Mrs Gowdie's mixer, switched it on and plunged it into the potion

'What are you up to?' said Groome.

'Er... mixing something,' said Cedric.

'Well, I don't think you ought to be using that,' said Groome. 'It belongs to Mrs Gowdie.'

'Only for a minute,' said Cedric as Groome came over from the sink and put down his bucket of fertilizer.

'What is it anyway?' he said suspiciously.

'An experiment.'

'Not fertilizer, is it? For his lordship's marrow?'

'Of course not,' said Cedric.

They heard Mrs Gowdie coming and Groome grabbed the mixer. He was still trying to turn it off when she appeared.

'Mr Groome!' she said. 'How dare you! That's my cake mixer.'

Groome finally managed to turn it off. 'But... but.. ,' he stammered.

'It's covered in fertilizer!' said Mrs Gowdie, snatching it from him.

'Please, Mrs Gowdie — ' said Cedric.

'Take that horrid stuff and get out of my nice clean kitchen,' Mrs Gowdie continued and pushed a bucket into Groome's hands. It was Cedric's bucket, but Groome was too full of outraged innocence to notice.

'Listen, Betty — ' he began angrily.

'At once!' said Mrs Gowdie firmly.

'But Mrs Gowdie — ' said Cedric.

'You too, Cedric,' said Mrs Gowdie, giving him Groome's bucket. 'Marrows indeed! You're marrow mad!'

It wasn't until Catweazle had spat out the fertilizer spluttering with fury that Cedric realized what had happened and knew that he'd got to get Catweazle's bucket back.

Luckily Groome's little greenhouse was empty when they reached it and they were able to switch the buckets. Half the potion had gone but Catweazle scooped up the rest in his hands and drank with obvious enjoyment.

Cedric was staring at the marrow in amazement. It seemed to be much bigger. 'What's happened to it?' said Cedric. 'It wasn't like that first thing this morning. It was big, yes, but not that big!'

The marrow was nearly four feet long.

' 'Tis a potent potion,' said Catweazle.

'But it wasn't designed for marrows,' said Cedric.

> 'Toad flax, garlic, rue and yarrow,
> Warm me to the very marrow,'

repeated Catweazle. 'Dost thou not remember?'

'That's crazy!' exclaimed Cedric. 'This isn't bone marrow, it's vegetable marrow.'

'Mayhap,' said Catweazle, 'but magic is magic.'

Cedric touched it carefully. 'It feels quite warm!' he said. 'Listen Catweazle, if this thing is growing, there's only one thing to do. We've got to try to balance things up a bit.'

'What meanest thou?' said Catweazle.

'Pour some of the potion on Dad's marrow.'

They hid as Groome came back to the greenhouse with a large garden syringe. He gasped when he saw the marrow. Then he pinched himself to make sure he was really awake, 'Stone the crows!' he said softly. 'Stone the crows!'

He ran back to the house, where Mrs Gowdie was busily making hundreds of little fairy cakes. 'My marrow's four feet long!' he said excitedly.

Mrs Gowdie looked at him. 'Is it now,' she said calmly.

'It's a miracle,' said Groome. 'I've been singled out.' 'Yes, Henry,' said Mrs Gowdie. 'Just relax and I'll make you a nice cup of tea.' But he was on tenterhooks to get back to his marrow.

Cedric and Catweazle were carefully pouring the rest of the potion over Lord Collingford's marrow. They watched fascinated as it quivered gently and then started to grow very slowly almost as if it was being blown up like a balloon.

Groome had another look at his marrow and tore back to Mrs Gowdie. 'It's six now!' he gasped.

'Six what?' said Mrs Gowdie, who was still hard at work making fairy cakes.

'Feet! Feet!' cried Groome.

'What are you talking about?' said Mrs Gowdie. Groome looked

bleakly at her. ‘My marrow,’ he said. Mrs Gowdie straightened up and brushed a currant from her fingers. ‘You’ve got to pidl yourself together, Henry,’ she said firmly. ‘You’re letting this marrow get on top of you.’

‘Not if I can help it,’ groaned Groome. ‘It’s a judgement, that’s what it is. Where will it end? Where will it end?’ and he rushed out almost knocking over Lady Collingford as she came into the kitchen.

‘What on earth’s the matter with Groome?’ she said, staring after him.

‘It’s his .. er... marrow,’ said Mrs Gowdie. ‘It’s rather serious, my lady. He’s become obsessed with the idea that it’s six feet long!’

‘What!’

‘He really believes it. I’m getting worried.’

‘I’ve never heard anything so absurd. He’s obviously got over-excited.’

At that moment, Lord Collingford came in, wild-eyed and trembling. His marrow too, had grown to six feet and was beginning to push its way out of the greenhouse. ‘Dottie,’ he said hoarsely, ‘could I have a word with you about…’ his voice dropped to a whisper, ‘my marrow.'

Meanwhile, Cedric watched as his father’s huge marrow, now fully ten feet long, gave a great shudder and completely demolished the greenhouse. He looked at Catweazle in alarm. ‘How big are they going to get?’ he demanded.

‘I know not, my brother,’ said Catweazle, smiling happily.

‘That thing’s running amok!’ said Cedric. ‘You’ve got to do something.’

‘Ay,’ said Catweazle, ‘make more potion.’

‘What for?’ asked Cedric.

‘Bananas!’ said Catweazle greedily, as he scampered away fizzing with excitement. ‘I will make mighty bananas!'

‘Come back!’ yelled Cedric, but Catweazle took no notice.

Cedric ran through the grounds in a panic and reached the front of Kings Farthing just as Archie Goodwin arrived in his little van. Archie was the owner of a large nursery near Elderford and had come to judge the various fruit and vegetable competitions.

‘Hello, Cedric, old boy,’ he said jovially, ‘where’s your Dad? Tending his marrow is he?’ He opened the back of his van and took out a large basket of vegetables. ‘Here,’ he said, ‘better stick ’em in the kitchen.’

‘Oh, thanks,’ said Cedric.

‘Mind the marrow,’ said Archie, tapping it gently ‘Bet you won’t see one like that this afternoon.’

Cedric saw his distraught father in the distance and beat a hasty retreat.

‘Hello Archie,’ said Lord Collingford, breathlessly. ‘Glad you could

come.'

'How's your marrow, sir?' inquired Archie politely.

Lord Collingford shuddered. 'Dreadful,' he groaned.

'Sorry to hear that,' said Archie. 'You won't enter it then?'

'Enter it?' gasped Lord Collingford, with a vision of being swallowed up by the monster.

'For the competition,' said Archie.

'I can't,' said Lord Collingford, 'it's too big.'

'Too big?' grinned Archie.

Lord Collingford gripped Archie's arm. 'Ten feet long,' he said desperately. 'Four feet thick.'

Archie roared with laughter. 'Oh, that's jolly good! Ten feet long!' and he shook with laughter again.

'And still growing,' said Lord Collingford, angry that Archie wasn't taking him seriously.

'Still growing!' howled Archie, holding his sides and hooting with mirth.

'I'm serious, Archie,' said Lord Collingford angrily. 'It's wrecked the greenhouse!'

Archie was crying with laughter. Tears of joy were rolling down his red cheeks and getting lost in his moustache. He tried hard to pull himself together. 'Oh dear,' he gasped, 'that's the best one I've heard for weeks, it really is. I'd better get over to the marquee and leave you to — ' he burst into helpless laughter again — 'finish growing your marrow!'

Still laughing, Archie left Lord Collingford and went off in the direction of the marquee where he met Groome walking along in a rather dazed condition.

'Afternoon, Mr Groome,' said Archie.

'Hello, Mr Goodwin,' muttered Groome.

'How's your marrow?' said Archie.

Groome looked at him, with a haunted expression on his face. 'You'd never believe me,' he said.

'Ah, you can't catch me with that one,' chuckled Archie knowingly.

'What?' said Groome.

'It's ten feet long, isn't it?' said Archie with a wink. 'It's wrecked the greenhouse!' and before Groome could recover from his surprise, Archie walked away laughing merrily.

A few minutes later, Groome came face to face with Lord Collingford.

'I've got something to tell you, my lord,' said Groome, 'about my marrow,'

'Go on,' said Lord Collingford, beginning to fear the worst.

'It's — it's — ten feet long.'

‘So’s mine,’ said Lord Collingford.

For a moment they stared at each other in horror and then they both made for Groome’s greenhouse at the double. Crowds of people watched as they ran past the various stalls and sideshows. Lady Collingford, who had persuaded Cedric to help her, saw them and turned to Mrs Gowdie with a sigh. ‘Marrows!’ she said.

The two men came panting up to the giant marrow, which was nearly the size of a bus.

‘I think it’s stopped growing,’ said Groome.

‘Thank heavens,’ said Lord Collingford. ‘I hope mine has.’

Groome shook his head. ‘Might just be resting,’ he muttered grimly.

c They moved away from it and whispered almost as if the marrow might overhear them. ‘We can’t risk it,’ said Lord Collingford. ‘We’ll have to be ruthless,’

‘Ruthless, my lord?’ asked Groome, trembling.

Lord Collingford nodded. ‘We’ll chop them up and throw them in the moat,’

Groome suddenly looked very sad.

‘It’s the only way, Groome,’ said Lord Collingford gently.

Groome sighed. ‘Yes, my lord,’ he said finally, ‘I sup-pose you’re right.’

They turned back to the marrow and both gasped with surprise.

It was the size of a small car.

‘It’s shrinking!’ breathed Groome.

‘By George, you’re right!’ said Lord Collingford.

Groome looked at his watch. ‘Ten minutes to go before the judging!’ he said in a voice loaded with meaning.

‘I beg your pardon?’ said Lord Collingford.

‘I’m cutting mine right now,’ said Groome, the light of battle once more shining in his eyes. ‘It might stop it shrinking. Better get back to yours, my lord,’ he continued as he looked round for his gardening knife, ‘the competition’s not over yet!’

Lord Collingford raced back to his marrow and was horrified to find that it wasn’t much bigger than a sack of potatoes and still shrinking. Quickly he opened his knife and attacked the stalk.

In the marquee Archie began the judging. Cedric couldn’t forget the giant marrows about to engulf Kings Farthing, until suddenly he noticed something among all the cups and prizes.

Most of the prizes were things for the garden, trowels, spades, bags of fertilizer and so on, but right on the edge of the table was the prize for the best marrow. It was a stone cherub pouring water from an urn, the sign of Aquarius, the Water Bearer! Cedric looked at it thoughtfully for some moments and then slipped away to the kitchen.

‘A really beautiful colour and firmness, which always distinguishes

this variety,' said Archie, holding up a splendid bowl of apples. 'The entries for this class are all extremely good,' he said. Then his heart sank as he saw

Groome and Lord Collingford come into the marquee each carrying his marrow carefully wrapped up in sacking.

'Er... and now... the marrows,' said Archie, and the two men brought them to join the others already on the judging bench.

'They don't look six feet long to me,' said Lady Collingford.

'Men always exaggerate, my lady,' said Mrs Gowdie. Ah!' said Archie, 'the ten-foot marrows, eh?' and he winked at Groome and Lord Collingford, who were scowling at each other. 'Now, don't be bashful. You'll have to unwrap them, you know.'

The two marrows were identical. Archie measured them in silence, wondering how he could award the prize without offending either of the fanatics.

'Er… it looks like a draw, I'm afraid,' he said finally, looking at them with some trepidation.

'Just a minute, Mr Goodwin!' called a voice.

It was Cedric, carrying the marrow Archie had brought them. Everyone turned in astonishment as he bore it to the table. It was clearly the winner and Groome and Lord Collingford were shattered.

'Well done, old boy,' said Archie, with considerable relief. 'I couldn't have grown a better one myself.' He winked at Cedric and gratefully handed him the little stone figure.

Catweazle, who had not succeeded in his attempt to grow a giant banana, was still stirring the bubbling cauldron when Cedric knocked at the door of Duck Halt later that evening.

'Merry meet, merry part,' muttered the magician, giving Owlface the

ancient magic greeting. ‘Hast thou brought the magic mixer?’

‘Afraid not,’ said Cedric. ‘Nothing to plug it in to. Anyhow the marrows shrank again so it wouldn’t have worked.’

Catweazle shook his head. ‘Nay,’ he said angrily, ‘nothing works. Nothing hath ever worked and nothing will ever work. ’Tis all folly.’

‘Cheer up!’ said Cedric. ‘Your bone-ache’s gone. And I’ve brought you a present.’

‘Tcha!’ said Catweazle, dismissing him peevishly. ‘What’s more important, the great flying spell, or giant bananas?’

Catweazle snorted. ‘Flying, thou gowk!’

‘Then how about this?’ said Cedric, and took the sign of Aquarius from behind his back.

For a moment Catweazle couldn’t believe it. He looked wonderingly at the little figure that Owlface held out to him and then, reaching out, he took it carefully from him.

“Thou art a mighty magician!’ he said sadly. ‘Thy power is greater than mine.’

‘Don’t be silly,’ said Cedric, ‘you’re much better than me. I was just lucky, that’s all. I won it for you.’

‘Won it?’ said Catweazle.

‘That’s right,’ said Cedric. ‘In a marrow competition.’

PISCES

THE platform at Duck Halt was slowly being covered by fallen leaves and the early mornings had become damp and cold. Catweazle knew that before long he would begin to feel drowsy during the day as the time for the Long Sleep drew nearer. He was worried in case he wouldn't have time to complete his great quest.

Pisces the Fish, the twelfth Sign, had been easy to find. He had stolen two goldfish from the lily pond at Kings Farthing and put them in a jam-jar. Now, with the Zodiac completed, he stood in the middle of the circle and carefully drew Adamcos from its sheath.

'Agla!' he intoned. 'Tetragram!'

Touchwood croaked and crawled into his boot. 'Schempamporasch!' cried Catweazle, waving his ceremonial knife and hoping something magical would happen. 'O, Spirits of the earth, air, fire, and thou, O my magic Spirit of water, I call on thee! Lead me to the thirteenth Sign!'

There was silence, broken by the chattering of birds outside. Catweazle shrugged and shuffled over to Touchwood's little home. 'Thou art my familiar spirit,' he whispered. 'Come! tell me, what is the Sign?'

Touchwood crawled grumpily from the depths of the boot and stared almost insolently at his master. A halfeaten earwig stuck from the corner of his wide mouth. He gulped and the earwig vanished completely.

'Mirksome kindled wimble!' swore Catweazle angrily. What help art thou?'

Touchwood, having disposed of his breakfast, croaked belligerently and crawled back into the warm darkness of the boot.

'May thy warts grow warts!' cursed Catweazle and sank down wearily on an old car seat he had brought from the rubbish dump.

He recited the flying spell once again, hoping that it might provide him with a clue.

> 'Twelve are they that circle round
> If power you seek they must be found
> Then look for where the thirteenth lies
> And mount aloft, the one who flies,'

he muttered, but it was no use. The thirteenth sign remained a mystery to him.

Catweazle wasn't the only one with a problem that morning. Lord Collingford was in such financial difficulty that selling Kings Farthing

seemed to be the only solution.

'What about trying to find the treasure?' said Cedric.

'Oh, don't start that again, Cedric,' said Lord Collingford.

'But if we really searched — '

'No, darling,' said Lady Collingford firmly.

'My father,' said Lord Collingford, 'dug up the whole of the croquet lawn one summer. And all he found was eight arrow heads, a couple of cannon balls and the key to the front door.'

Lady Collingford sighed. 'It's been such a terrible season,' she said.

'People aren't interested in military history any more, Dottie,' replied her husband. 'I think they only come here to write their names on the walls.'

While the Collingfords grew steadily more depressed, Catweazle went up to the house hoping that Cedric would let him into the secret chamber to look for the thirteenth Sign. After hiding the tricycle he was creeping up from the moat when Groome suddenly saw him and gave chase with a roar. Catweazle turned and fled but Groome kept after him and there was no escape. Catweazle reached the edge of the moat, and leapt into the air in a vain attempt to jump across. There was a splash as he hit the water and then, before Groome's astonished eyes, he was thrown back on to the bank by an unknown force, almost as if the surface of the moat had become a giant spring.

Groome stared at Catweazle and began to stumble backwards, pointing and stammering incoherently. Catweazle himself was too shaken to take much notice. He felt his robe and was amazed to find it dry to its ragged hem. Thoughts buzzed in his head like bees in an overturned hive. What had happened to him? Why, if he still could not fly, had he not plunged into the water and returned to the past? Was his water magic now denied to him? Was he trapped for ever in the world of electri-ckery?

He decided to find out. 'Salmay! Dalmay! Adonay!' he cried, and shutting his eyes, jumped into the moat. Once again, he was hurled out without a drop of water on him.

This was too much for Groome, who turned and ran towards the house, while Catweazle, now convinced there was no escape from the twentieth century, hid himself, crouched and trembling, in the ruined greenhouse.

The Collingfords were very worried about Groome's fantastic account of the ragged man who bounced in and out of the moat without getting wet. Cedric however realized that Catweazle must be at the bottom of all this and went looking for him, while Lord and Lady Collingford tried to calm their excited gardener.

‘I know someone who might be able to help,’ said Lady Collingford quietly, and she reached for the telephone directory.

‘Who’s that?’ asked Lord Collingford.

‘Doctor Benjamin Wenik,’ said Lady Collingford. ‘He’s a specialist in... er... well, nervous breakdowns. He’s just the man to handle Groome.’

Doctor Wenik agreed to come at once and arrived at Kings Farthing an hour later. He was a dapper man with a smooth, sardonic face and dark knowing eyes, immaculately dressed in a black jacket and striped trousers.

Groome was being provided with a steady flow of cups of tea from Mrs Gowdie. He sat on the couch in the sitting-room and gazed through the window, never once taking his eyes off the distant moat. ‘You must tell me everything,’ said Wenik, sitting down beside him.

‘But I’ve already told everyone everything,’ said Groome, beginning to think that perhaps the whole thing had been a hallucination after all.

‘Now, come, Mr Groome,’ said Lord Collingford. ‘We are all here to help you.’

‘I don’t need any help,’ retorted Groome.

‘Please!’ said Wenik, turning to the Collingfords. ‘May I see him alone?’

Groome was a little nervous when they all left him. ‘Don’t worry, my boy,’ said Wenik, taking a watch from his waistcoat, ‘you must relax.

Very important, you know.' He swung the watch in front of Groome's face. 'Relax... just relax... sleep.... You must sleep.... Deeply asleep… deeply asleep... Asleep... asleep... asleep...'

But it was Wenik who began to nod off. Slowly his eyes closed and he began to breathe rather heavily. The watch stopped swinging and Groome was quite worried. He pulled the watch like a bell rope. 'Here!' he said loudly. Are you all right?'

Wenik woke with a start. 'Where was I?' he said.

'Don't ask me,' sighed Groome.

'Now what exactly did you see?' said Wenik. 'You mustn't be afraid to tell me.'

'I'm not afraid,' replied Groome angrily. 'I saw this old man with a beard — '

'Good!' said Wenik. 'With a beard. Have you seen him before?'

Groome groaned. 'Yes,' he continued, 'I keep seeing him. Dressed in a robe he is. A long brown robe. And sometimes he rides a tricycle.'

'Go on,' said Wenik, calmly.

'I chased him to the moat and he tried to jump across it. But he fell in — at least he should have fallen in. But he bounced back. And he was absolutely dry. Even his feet!'

Wenik, who had been taking notes, looked up and frowned. 'But that is quite impossible, my boy,' he said.

'I know it's impossible!' said Groome, losing his temper completely. 'Any fool knows that!'

'Please keep calm, Mr Bloom.'

'Groome!'

'Of course, of course,' said Wenik hastily, feeling that it was going to take a long time to make his new patient see reason.

By this time Cedric had found Catweazle in the greenhouse and was angrily asking him what he had done to get Groome in such a state.

'The way back is denied me,' moaned Catweazle.

'What are you talking about?'

'I cannot go into water.'

Cedric stared at him.

'Water! Water!' said Catweazle, thumping an empty oil-drum. 'The magic power of water that carries me through Time.'

'Stop that stupid talk,' said Cedric. 'You've scared Groome half silly.'

'How shall I get back?'

'On your tricycle of course,' said Cedric, thinking Catweazle meant Duck Halt.

'Thou maggot!' snapped Catweazle, 'Listen to me — ' 'Not now. If you're found, you're for the high jump.' 'The high jump?' said Catweazle, looking up into the air and thinking of the flying spell.

'Oh for heaven's sake, get lost! exploded Cedric and rushed out of

the greenhouse.

Catweazle shook his head bitterly. ‘Get lost?’ he muttered. ‘Nay, Owlface, I am already lost. Trapped in thy world ..

He fetched his tricycle from its hiding place and started back to Duck Halt. Groome caught a glimpse of him as he pedalled off between the trees. With a shout he jumped to his feet and clambered through the window.

Doctor Wenik looked up from his notebook in surprise, and then, determined not to lose his patient, jammed on his hat and climbed out after him.

By this time Catweazle was half-way down the drive. Groome ran to his bicycle and shot off in pursuit. The doctor grabbed Mrs Gowdie’s bike and wobbled off after Groome.

As Catweazle turned out on to the road by the gatehouse, he was horrified to see the local cycle club, the Elderford Eagles, coming towards him. There were at least thirty of them and they all began ringing their bells when they saw him in the middle of the road. Catweazle leapt into the ditch and pulled the tricycle after him. Then Groome came whizzing through the gates and nearly collided with the leading cyclist. He had to turn round and try to outstrip the main group but instead was swept away down the road entirely surrounded by Elderford Eagles.

Catweazle climbed back on his tricycle and was disappearing slowly in the opposite direction when Doctor Wenik appeared on Mrs Gowdie’s bicycle.

Wenick stared at Catweazle. It was his patient’s hallucination! ‘Just a moment!’ he yelled. Catweazle didn’t like the look of the stranger at all. Wenik’s dark suit and homburg hat convinced him he had a sorcerer on his tail and he increased speed. Wenik, however, was not to be thrown off so easily. He was beginning to master Mrs Gowdie’s bicycle and, although his pinstripe trousers kept getting caught in the chain and the handlebars were decidedly loose, he slowly began to overhaul the ragged magician.

When Catweazle turned off the road Wenik followed him into the woods. On and on they sped, the doctor drawing closer all the time.

At top speed Catweazle whizzed along the platform at

Duck Halt, sending the dead leaves scurrying into the air. He ran inside and crouched down behind the weighing machine. A moment later Wenik, very out of breath from the unaccustomed exercise, knocked cautiously on the door.

‘Hello.’ he panted nervously, ‘anyone at home?’

There was no reply.

‘No need to hide, you know,’ he continued, coming inside and looking warily around him. ‘I won’t hurt you. Don’t be frightened.’

Touchwood crawled out of his boot, croaked, and glared grumpily at Wenik. The doctor was so fascinated by him that he didn't notice Catweazle creeping up.

'Schempamporasch!' cried Catweazle, hoping the Word of Power would drive the sorcerer away.

Wenik spun round.

'Begone!' Catweazle commanded.

'But my dear fellow — ' remonstrated the doctor.

'Thou prying brock! Wouldst steal Touchwood?'

'Touchwood?'

'My minion.'

'Never. I am your friend.'

'Nay,' Catweazle shook his head. 'I know thee not.'

'Wenik. Benjamin Wenik,' said the doctor and held out his hand.

Catweazle took it and turned it up to read the palm. A quick glance was enough to convince him the sorcerer meant no harm.

'Can I sit down?' asked Wenik.

'Thou know'st better than I,' said Catweazle rudely.

Wenik sat down on the car seat while Catweazle threw some more wood on the Sacred Fire.

'Er... nice place you have here,' said Wenik, ingratiatingly, looking at the piles of rubbish around him.

Catweazle handed him a banana.

'You are very kind,' said Wenik politely. 'Thank you very much.'

Catweazle also peeled a banana and they ate in silence.

'Tell me,' said Wenik, finishing his banana and carefully wiping his rather podgy white fingers on his handkerchief, 'why do you live here?'

Catweazle decided to trust him. 'Canst thou keep a secret?' he said, almost whispering in Wenik's left ear.

'But of course, my dear boy!' said Wenik.

For a moment, Catweazle warmed his wrinkled brown hands over the fire bucket. 'One day soon,' he confided, 'I shall fly.'

Wenik was careful not to betray his surprise. After all, lots of people in the past had told him they were really Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great.

'You mean — ' he flapped his arms ' — fly?'

' 'Tis so,' said Catweazle, 'I will tell thee more!'

'Yes,' said Wenik, his professional interest aroused, 'why not, my boy? Why not?'

'I can no longer return to the past.'

Wenik looked at Catweazle. So the old man had lost his memory had he? Perhaps he could be helped.

'This worries you?' said Wenik confidently.

‘I am trapped,’ said Catweazle sadly.

‘It’s nothing to get upset about. It’s quite a common feeling. You feel trapped. So. Even I feel trapped. Sometimes.’

‘Ah!’ said Catweazle, ‘thou also!’ He leant nearer to Wenik. ‘Didst thou come through water?’

‘Oh... Oh yes!’ said Wenik, wondering what water had to do with it. ‘Tell me, what do you remember most clearly?’

‘The Battle of Hastings,’ said Catweazle.

Wenik looked at him. The old man was obviously trying to hide something. ‘Ah yes,’ he said finally. ‘The Battle of Hastings, King Harold with the arrow in his eye.’

‘Nay, nay,’ snorted Catweazle contemptously, ‘twas grit in his eye. The arrow was in his chest.’

Wenik wiped his forehead. ‘Oh, was it?’ he said feebly.

‘What dost thou remember?’ said Catweazle, suddenly anxious to swop stories about the Norman invasion.

‘I’m supposed to be helping you,’ said Wenik, querulously.

‘Then canst thou help me to get back?’

‘Of course. Of course. Er . .. what else do you remember?’

‘The dungeons...’

‘Dungeons!’

Aye, but I escaped.’

‘That’s a big step forward,’ said Wenik.

‘Indeed,’ agreed Catweazle. ‘Nine hundred years.’

Wenik began to feel the whole thing was getting beyond him.

‘Dost know — the Signs?’ whispered Catweazle, coming very close to him again.

‘Er... I can recognize most of them,’ said Wenik, nervously.

‘I have the Twelve,’ said Catweazle triumphantly.

‘Twelve?’

‘Ay. Dost thou know of the Thirteenth?’ By now Wenik was convinced he was dealing with a lunatic. He stood up but Catweazle grabbed him by the arm and pulled him over to the Zodiac.

‘Let us fly together!’ said Catweazle.

‘Let go of me!’ shouted Wenik in a panic.

‘Nay,’ said Catweazle drawing Adamcos, ‘give me the Sign!’

Wenik, convinced he was about to be killed, collapsed on to his knees in the middle of the circle. ‘Help! Help!’ he shouted at the top of his voice.

‘Dost thou call on the Spirits?’ said Catweazle, waving Adamcos and kneeling beside him.

‘Help! Help!’ roared Wenik again.

‘Help! Help!’ Catweazle joined in, releasing his hold on Wenik. ‘Salmay! Dalmay! Adonay!’

Wenik immediately scrambled to his feet, panting with fear. Then he rushed back to Mrs Gowdie's bike and rode off as fast as he could. Catweazle, now sure that the black-clad sorcerer had the Sign, scampered outside and gave chase on his tricycle.

Wenik rode wildly through the woods, occasionally throwing desperate glances over his houlder at Catweazle, who hung grimly on his tail. Just as they reached the road the Elderford Eagles, with Groome still trapped in the middle of them, came sweeping down the hill towards them.

They seemed bound to collide, but at the last second the avalanche of cyclists divided and flowed round Wenik and Catweazle in a blur of shining wheels and muddy knees. Groome braked hard as Catweazle flashed past, while the Elderford Eagles re-bunched and disappeared down the road. Then Groome turned and set off after Catweazle.

At Kings Farthing, Lord and Lady Collingford were about to organize a search party, when Mrs Gowdie came running into the sitting-room.

'Doctor Wenik's back!' she said.

'What about Mr Groome?' said Lord Collingford.

'No, my lord. But there's a strange man chasing Doctor Wenik.'

'Chasing him?' asked Cedric.

'And he's just like Henry said,' Mrs Gowdie went on excitedly. 'Brown robe and a beard!'

Meanwhile Catweazle had chased the wretched Wenik across the croquet lawn and down to the edge of the moat.

'Give me the thirteenth Sign!' he cried.

'I haven't got it,' said Wenik, trying to get away, 'I don't know where it is.'

As the magician moved towards him Wenik gave him a desperate push. Catweazle staggered, lost his balance, and fell backwards into the moat. For a moment his body seemed to lie in the water. Then, once again, he bounced up on to the bank. Wenik's mouth dropped open, and he fainted at Catweazle's feet.

Groome appeared in the distance and Catweazle sped off through the grounds, and the Collingford household were far too busy reviving Wenik to go after him.

'Bounced out! Bone dry!' gasped Wenik, and he returned to London by the very next train and spent several weeks visiting another doctor, also used to curing people who suffered from hallucinations.

For the Collingfords the affair was another of the many unsolved mysteries of that summer. Groome decided to keep very quiet if anything odd should happen to him in the future, but he still spent the next few days keeping a sharp lookout for Catweazle.

The old magician finally accepted that his water magic would no longer work and that from now on he would remain in the world of

electrickery. In any case he had no real desire to return to his old world now that the Normans had made it so dangerous.

Cedric sat with him, reading the ancient book of magic, while Catweazle struggled with 'I am a Little Dog'. There was no sound in Duck Halt except the crackling of the Sacred Fire.

'Time's running out,' said Cedric softly.

'Ay,' muttered Catweazle.

'School starts soon,' said Cedric.

'The nights are colder,' said Catweazle. 'I have the bone-ache.'

He pulled his robe round him and leant nearer to the fire. His shadow flickered on the wall in the orange fight.

'If we only knew where to look,' said Cedric, dreaming of the lost treasure.

'I would fly...' murmured Catweazle, twisting his forefinger in his dirty beard.

'I would save Kings Farthing,' said Cedric, staring into the fire.

TIME had finally run out for Lord and Lady Collingford and they had decided to sell their home. They stood at the window and watched the leaves falling on the croquet lawn from the big chestnut trees.

'Have you told Groome yet?' asked Lady Collingford.

Lord Collingford nodded.

'Was he upset?'

'Yes, as a matter of fact, I think he was.'

'What did he say?'

Lord Collingford turned and looked at her. 'Just that, if he'd known, he wouldn't have ordered the manure. For your roses, you know...'

'Yes, of course,' said Lady Collingford, her eyes beginning to fill with tears, 'for my roses.'

There was a pause. Lord Collingford handed her a handkerchief. 'Have you told Mrs Gowdie?' he asked.

'No,' said Lady Collingford. 'Have you told Cedric?'

Lord Collingford swallowed. 'Not yet,' he said.

'Aren't we being a couple of cowards!' said Lady Collingford blowing her nose.

Groome was helping Cedric to carry his school trunk downstairs. They dumped it in the main hall and both sat on it for a moment to get their breath back.

'Now you won't have a last-minute rush tomorrow,' said Groome.

'Thanks,' said Cedric glumly.

'Cheer up,' said Groome, 'you can't expect the holidays to last forever.'

'I'd better get my cello,' said Cedric.

'Wait a minute,' said Groome. 'I've got something for you.'

He took an old brass telescope from his jacket. It gleamed like gold and was as smooth as glass from years of careful polishing. 'Belonged to my uncle,' said Groome. 'When he was in the Merchant Navy.'

Cedric had never been given anything by Groome before and for a moment he was too overwhelmed to speak.

'It's only an old telescope,' said Groome, rather gruffly. 'No good to me.'

'I think it's beautiful,' said Cedric, finding his voice at last. 'I love it. Thank you very much indeed, Mr Groome.

'Well.... It'll be a sort of... souvenir . . said Groome.

Cedric looked up. 'A souvenir? You don't mean you're leaving do you?'

'I couldn't stay on here, after you'd all gone,' said Groome.

Cedric stared at him for a moment, realizing what he meant, and

then ran towards the sitting-room.

He burst in and confronted his parents. ‘Is it true?’ he demanded. ‘Are we leaving?’

Lord and Lady Collingford looked at one another.

‘I’m afraid so,’ said Lord Collingford.

‘Why didn’t you tell me?’

‘We didn’t want to spoil your last day,’ said Lady Collingford hastily.

‘Well, you’ve ruined it now, haven’t you?’ said Cedric and rushed out of the sitting-room.

He sped down the long avenue of trees facing the front of the house while the rooks wheeled and cawed overhead like omens of doom. Near the end of the drive

Cedric turned and looked back at Kings Farthing. The clock in the tower struck twelve and Catweazle suddenly darted out from behind one of the trees.

‘What ails thee, Owlface?’ he asked.

‘It’s dreadful,’ said Cedric, ‘I don’t know what to do.’ ‘Nor I, my brother,’ said Catweazle. ‘I cannot find the thirteenth Sign.’

‘We’ve got to move,’ said Cedric.

‘Why?’ asked Catweazle, looking quickly round. ‘No one comes.’

‘Don’t you understand? We’re leaving the place. Going away.’

‘Whither art thou going?’

‘I don’t know yet. Dad’s got to sell the house first and that won’t be easy — ’

‘But the Sign! Thou must not go! Thou must help me find it so that I may fly!’

‘If only I could find the treasure — ’

‘But, the Sign — ’

‘Even Groome’s upset. Look what he gave me.’ Catweazle looked at the telescope. ‘ ’Tis magic?’ he asked.

‘No,’ said Cedric. ‘It makes things far away look much nearer.’

‘Then ’tis magic!’ said Catweazle, waving it like a wand. ‘O, thirteenth Sign,’ he chanted, ‘draw thou near...’

‘Not like that,’ said Cedric. ‘Point it at something,’ Catweazle pointed the telescope at Kings Farthing. ‘No. Look,’ said Cedric, taking it from him, ‘I’ll show you.’ He lifted the telescope to his eye, and pointing it at the tower, focused it on the clockface.

The Roman figures round the dial seemed near enough to touch and Cedric could see the minute hand creeping steadily away from the figure twelve.

But something was wrong.

‘Give me the Seeing Pipe!’ cried Catweazle, impatiently trying to grab the telescope, but Cedric fended him off and stared hard through the telescope at the Roman twelve.

It was not XII, it was XIII.

'Thirteen!' gasped Cedric.

'What sayest thou?' said Catweazle.

'Thirteen!' said Cedric, pointing wildly at the distant clock tower.

'Thou hast found it?' Catweazle shouted. 'The thirteenth Sign of the Zodiac?'

> ' "Twelve are they that circle round
> If power you seek they must be found," '

said Cedric, suddenly tremendously excited.

' "Then look for where the thirteenth lies," ' Catweazle went on.

' "If power you seek," ' repeated Cedric. 'Power! Don't you understand, Catweazle? It's the treasure!'

'Treasure?'

Cedric gripped the magician by the arm. ' "Then look for where the thirteenth lies," ' he said. 'Don't you see? You read it wrong! Not thirteenth. Thirteen! And it lies. It's only pretending to be twelve.'

Catweazle peered down the wrong end of the telescope. 'I can see nothing,' he said.

Cedric grapped it back and focused it on the clock face. There was no doubt about it. It was XIII.

' "And mount aloft — the one who flies," ' he muttered. Raising the telescope, he pointed it at the weathervane on the steeple above the clock tower. The figure was that of Father Time carrying an hour-glass and a scythe.

' 'The one who flies!" ' breathed Cedric.

Now he was sure the treasure was somewhere in the dock tower. Lord Alfred's rhyme contained all the clues. He put the telescope in his pocket and began to run back up the drive with Catweazle close behind.

'The thirteenth Sign! The quest is at an end! I shall fly! I shall fly!' shouted the magician as he ran.

When they reached the main entrance, Cedric tried to stop him from following, but nothing could shake off Catweazle now. ' 'Tis the great moment,' he said, 'I must come with thee.'

They ran up the stairs and along the passages which led to the tower. Up the steps they panted until finally, opening a trap door, they climbed the ladder into the clock chamber.

'It's up here somewhere,' said Cedric, looking round the dusty little room, 'it must be,' but a search revealed nothing but an empty tea chest and some rusty chains.

Suddenly, Cedric looked up at the ceiling. 'I've got it!' he cried.

'Then give it to me!' said Catweazle.

Cedric pointed upwards. ‘Lord Alfred built the spire. Don’t you see? It must be inside it!’

Catweazle pointed Adamcos at the ceiling. For a moment the blade of his magic knife wavered like a compass needle, then it pointed steadily at one place. Cedric dragged over the tea-chest and climbed on it and began to feel the ceiling above Adamcos with the tops of his fingers.

‘There’s something here!’ he gasped. He tore the ceiling paper away and revealed a small square hatch. Then he took a deep breath and pushed it open.

A shower of gold coins and precious stones poured down on top of them. Necklaces, pendants, jewelled belts, and rings flashed and glittered as they fell. A golden chalice landed on Catweazle’s foot and finally a small sack crashed down, spilling its shining contents on to the dusty floor.

Cedric jumped from the tea chest. ‘I’ve found itl I’ve found it!’ he cried in triumph.

‘ ’Tis the Sign?’ asked Catweazle. ‘ Tis the Sign, Owlface?’

Cedric took no notice but unfolded a yellow piece of paper wrapped round the chalice. ‘Listen to this,’ he said.

> ‘ “The hours are they that circle round.
> The thirteen you have surely found.
> The one who flies is heedless time.
> The spell’s undone, the Power is thine.” ’

Still Catweazle did not understand. ‘But where is the Sign?’ he asked, as Cedric bundled the spilled treasure back into the sack ready to go down the ladder.

Cedric looked at Catweazle. In his excitement he had forgotten all about the flying spell. ‘Don’t you understand?’ he said, as gently as he could. ‘There is no sign.’

Catweazle stared in bewilderment. ‘No Sign?’

Cedric shook his head. ‘I can’t explain now,’ he said, ‘I haven’t got time. I’ll see you later. Back at Duck Halt — O.K.?’

Catweazle listened as Cedric’s footsteps died away. He suddenly felt very lonely.

‘No thirteenth Sign?’ he muttered. ‘Then the quest is ended.’ He sheathed Adamcos. ‘And thou also, Catweazle,’ he said sadly.

Meanwhile, Cedric hurtled down the stairs and into the sitting-room. His parents stared in utter disbelief as he poured the contents of the sack on to the table.

‘The lost treasure of the Collingfords!’ he cried.

Lord and Lady Collingford seemed stunned. Neither of them moved.

They just stared at the treasure as if it were a mirage. Finally Lord Collingford put out a trembling hand and picked up some of the gold coins.

'I don't believe it!' said Lady Collingford faintly.

'Where...? Where...? stammered Lord Colling-lingford.

'In the spire,' grinned Cedric. 'We won't have to sell the house now, will we?'

And then suddenly the tension was broken and the three of them were hugging each other and laughing with joy and all talking at once; while down by the moat, a ragged figure was on his lonely way back to Duck Halt.

Touchwood greeted his master with a perfunctory croak but Catweazle hardly noticed. Moving as if walking in his sleep he sat down and began to read from his magic book.

' "By the mysteries of the deep.
By the flames of Banal
By the power of the east wind,
By the silence of the night — " '

He closed the book with a mighty bang.

'Gibberish!' he snarled. 'Idle gibberish! All magic is gibberish!' Furious and disillusioned, he rocked from side to side writhing with anger.

'The thirteenth Sign!' he continued, bitterly mocking himself, 'I that have flown through time! I that have jumped nine hundred years! Duped! Fooled! Cheated!'

Unable to bear it any longer he jumped up and held his long white wand out in front of him. 'There is no magic! None!' he said loudly, and snapped the wand.

Touchwood croaked as the pieces fell to the floor beside his boot and Catweazle knelt and picked him up carefully.

'Am I thy master?' he asked.

Touchwood croaked again.

'Nay minion, no longer,' sighed Catweazle and carried him outside. 'I have forsaken magic and cannot keep thee,' he said quietly. 'Go Find thee a true magician. One worthy of thee. He put Touchwood down among the dead leaves on the platform. 'Merry meet, merry part,' he said softly.

Touchwood began to crawl away.

'Hide from the hungry crow,' called Catweazle.

'Beware foxes!' he called again.

Touchwood paused and a faint croak came down the platform.

'Swallow no bees!' called Catweazle a third time but there was no

reply. Touchwood was lost among the dead leaves.

'I knew him when he was a tadpole,' said Catweazle shaking his head sadly.

He went inside and shut the door. 'And I have the heartache,' he muttered. Then he sat down and looked round the room, staring miserably at a future with no magic in it.

At Kings Farthing they were making some attempt to sort out the pile of treasure on the sitting-room table, but Lord Collingford was too excited to be at all systematic. 'It's fantastic!' he said. 'There's an absolute fortune here!'

'But how did you know it was in the spire?' asked Lady Collingford.

'Lord Alfred's rhyme, I suppose.'

'What rhyme?'

'On the wall of the secret chamber.'

'What secret chamber?'

'I'll show you. The entrance is in my bedroom. It leads down to the old dungeons. I'd never have read the rhyme if it hadn't been for — ' Cedric broke off. He had suddenly remembered Catweazle.

'Hadn't been for what, Cedric?' said Lady Collingford.

'Excuse me, I'll be back,' said Cedric and rushed away while his parents looked at one another with astonishment.

At Duck Halt Catweazle had been disturbed from his gloomy thoughts by Touchwood croaking loudly outside the door. 'I bade thee leave me!' called Catweazle angrily, but Touchwood went on and on croaking. He was obviously very excited about something. Finally Catweazle couldn't bear the noise any longer and went angrily to the door. Touchwood was practically bursting himself with noise. ' 'Tis no croaking matter,' snapped Catweazle and picked him up, then his eyes opened wide with astonishment.

A great red globe was hanging in the sky, floating slowly and silently down until only the top of it could be seen over the golden trees. Catweazle gasped. Clearly this was very strong magic. He put Touchwood in his pocket and ran through the trees towards the giant ball.

It was in the middle of a field swaying very gently in the still autumn air and it was tethered to a basket which seemed to anchor it to the earth.

' 'Tis wondrous round,' murmured Catweazle, stalking towards the enormous ball. 'Round... like a...'

He stopped and suddenly understanding tingled through him. 'Round... like a circle,' he said to himself. The great ball turned slightly in the air. A large white ring had been painted on it and in the middle was the figure thirteen.

'Touchwood!' cried Catweazle, pulling the toad from his pocket.

‘Thou hast led me to the thirteenth Sign of the Zodiac. Tis the circle! No end. No beginning. Nothing. And everything!’

He stumbled towards the Sign. His magic was vindicated. His quest had not been in vain. He danced wildly round the great ball and climbed into the basket.

Cedric came running across the field towards him. ‘Come out!’ he called.

‘ ’Tis the thirteenth Sign!’

‘Don’t be silly. It’s a balloon!’

Cedric reached the basket and tried to pull Catweazle out but the magician refused to budge and there was a struggle. Catweazle grabbed a lever above his head and with a sudden roar, flames shot from the hot air burner and the balloon rose into the air.

‘What hast thou done?’ cried Catweazle, looking down at Cedric in terror.

‘Don’t touch anything!’ called Cedric. He ran after the balloon as it began to drift across the field.

Catweazle’s terror changed to excitement as he realized what was happening to him. He was leaving the earth! The magic globe was bearing him ever upwards!

‘ ’Tis the thirteenth Sign, Owlface!’ he shouted down to Cedric, running beneath him. ‘See. I fly! I fly!’

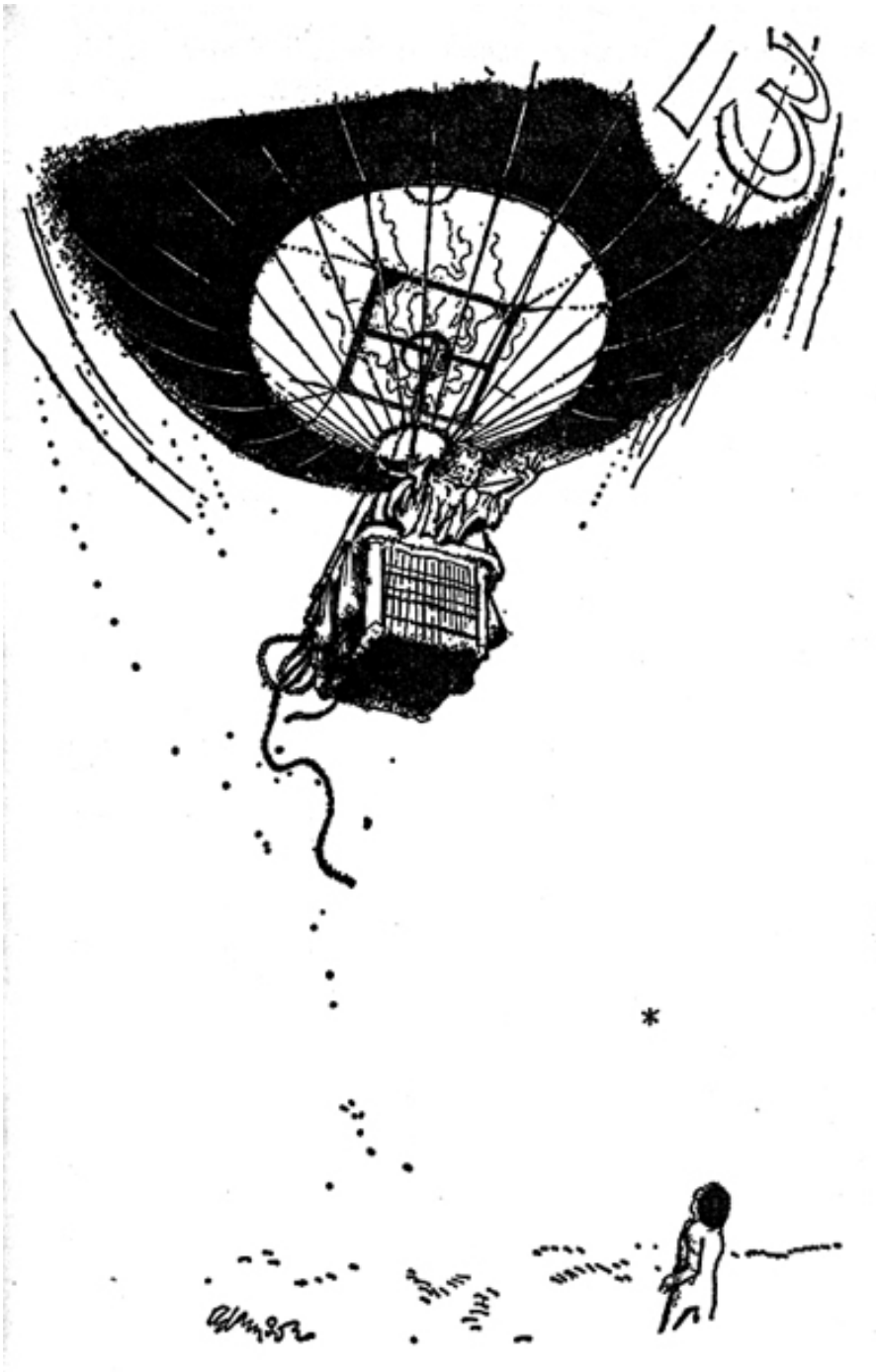
‘Come back!’ called Cedric.

‘Farewell!’ cried Catweazle. ‘Remember thy magic!’

The boy stopped running as the balloon rose higher, and then, as it turned and seemed to head towards Kings Farthing, Cedric tore after it through the woods.

At the house, the balloonist, who had literally ‘dropped in’ to see the Collingfords, was on the phone arranging for his trailer to collect the balloon when he suddenly looked out of the window and saw it gliding steadily towards the house at about fifty feet.

Fearing Cedric was inside it, Lord and Lady Collingford quickly ran outside. They were joined by Groome and Mrs Gowdie and they all looked up in astonishment at the ragged figure in the basket.



‘I fly, I fly!’ Catweazle cackled at them in triumph.

‘He must be mad!’ said Lord Collingford.

Cedric ran up. ‘No he’s not,’ he panted as the balloon floated over Kings Farthing.

‘What do you mean?’ said Groome.

‘He always said he’d fly,’ said Cedric.

‘Always?’ said Mrs Gowdie, curiously.

‘You mean you knew him?’ asked Lord Collingford.

‘Oh yes . . .’ said Cedric. ‘He helped me find the treasure.’

‘Then who was he?’

Cedric looked at them all. ‘You’d never believe me.’

Lord Collingford smiled at him. ‘Go on, Cedric, who was he?’

‘Well,’ said Cedric, looking a little sadly at the balloon as it disappeared in the distance, ‘he was a magician called Catweazle.’

The balloon flew higher and Catweazle looked happily at the woods and fields below him. He sang the flying spell.

> ‘ “Twelve are they that circle round.
> If power you seek they must be found.
> Then look for where the thirteenth lies,
> And mount aloft — the one who flies.” ’

Higher and higher he flew. Over towns and hills. He watched as the sun sank beneath the horizon and the stars of the Zodiac began to twinkle around him.

Touchwood croaked feebly. He had no head for heights.

‘Nay minion, fear not!’ said Catweazle. ‘Magic will lead us! Everything works, Touchwood! Everything works!’

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Carpenter was born in King's Lynn and spent most of his childhood in Norfolk. He was brought up on comics and Shakespeare, Greek mythology and Beano. Always interested in the theatre, he went to the Old Vic Theatre School and then into repertory all over the country. During these years he began to write short stories for radio.

After a year at the Old Vic he eventually began working in television, where he starred in a series for Granada. He has appeared in over 300 television programmes.

'Being a television actor helped to teach me to write,' he says, 'as sometimes the dialogue isn't very easy to say, and needs overhauling a bit.'

Catweazle was his first book and was based on the television serial he wrote for London Weekend International.

He is married to actress Annabelle Lee and they have two children, Tom and Harriet. His hobbies are painting, sculpture, jazz and talking to anybody about anything.

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